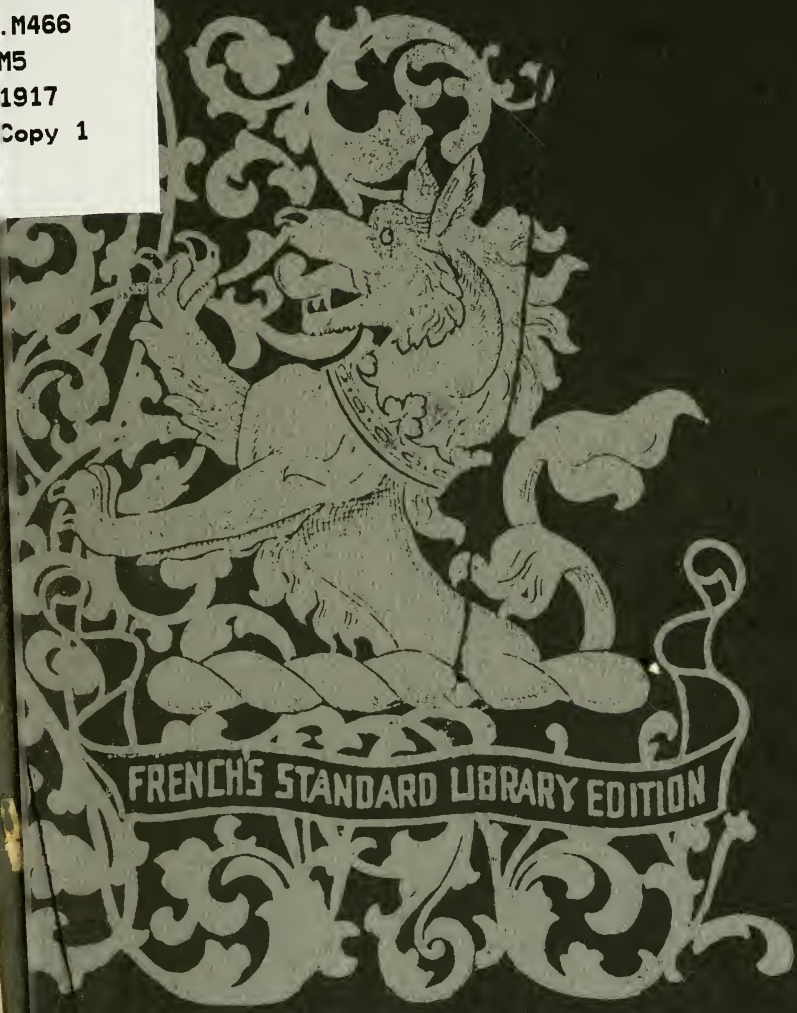


1917

Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh

BY
HARRY JAMES SMITH

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

4

Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh

ACT I

SCENE: *Living room in JUSTIN RAWSON'S Long Island Country house. Late summer after breakfast of a sunny day. The apartment is handsomely and choicely furnished, with a suggestion in everything of dignity and family pride. A very wide porch door opens upon a broad veranda, center, and beyond the veranda is seen an Italian garden and a glimpse of sand dunes and ocean. Hollyhocks look in at the low window, wide open, Left. Between the window and the porch door is a staircase, and close to the staircase a door admitting to domestic offices. Right, another door connecting with the library; a private telephone on the wall near this door.*

When the curtain rises ANTHONY and NINA are having an intimate little chat, ANTHONY half sitting on the edge of the table Right, and NINA leaning as enticingly as she knows how on the handle of a carpet-sweeper.

(ANTHONY is a good-looking, polished fellow of twenty-seven, but perhaps you would not trust him. Just now he is whispering something wheedling and pleasant in the girl's ear. She listens with sparkling eyes, roguishly.)

NINA. (Standing away with a shriek of laughter) Oh, Mr. Anthony! Aren't you an article!

ANTHONY. (*Demurely*) Why, what have I said now?

NINA. (*With giggles*) Oh, you imp! (*Feigns to slap him*) I never knew the beat of you for reeling off nonsense.

ANTHONY. You know very well every word I've said is solemn truth! (*Stepping towards her*)

NINA. (*Gaily*) You expect me to believe that?—

ANTHONY. (*Feigning jealousy*) Oh, you'd believe it quick enough if Mr. Geoffrey said it.

NINA. (*Archly*) He ain't that kind. Mr. Geoffrey's rather slow about some things. Very different from you.

ANTHONY. (*Aware of his own charms*) Now! Now!

NINA. Well, it may be a break for me to say so, seein' as he's your own brother, Mr. Anthony; but I never could stomach what you might call the farmer type! Even when they're dressed up, seems like you can always smell the barn on them. (*Kitson has entered L. and after a disapproving look at the two, begins a minute inspection of the corners of the apartment. NINA resumes a pretense of work but continues*) Give me cowboys on the stage; but don't let 'em get too close to me in real life!

ANTHONY. (*Patronizingly*) Lost something, Kitson?

KITSON. (*Who is a highly self-respecting family retainer, with a mournful manner*) No, sir. (*Resumes inspection*)

ANTHONY. You seem very busy. Might I inquire what you're doing?

KITSON. (*Sadly*) My duty, sir.

NINA. (*Pertly*) Mr. Kitson always goes the rounds like that every morning, to see I don't leave out anything.

KITSON. (*Bristling*) And good enough reason for it, I may say!

NINA. Yes, indeed! Don't know how you'd earn your wages if it wasn't for that. (*Puts carpet-sweeper off Right*)

(KITSON *draws himself up for a tremendous rejoinder, but recollects himself in the presence of ANTHONY, saying only in a sad voice:*)

KITSON. There *was* a time when housemaids was taught to know their place.

ANTHONY. (*Laughingly*) There was a time, Kitson—at least I'd like to think so—when you were rather less of a meddlesome old nuisance than you are now.

KITSON. You would not speak so to me, sir, in the presence of Mr. Rawson.

ANTHONY. Which reminds me, have you seen my father around anywhere?

KITSON. I saw him going towards the stables, sir, just now.

ANTHONY. Looking for Geoffrey—of course! There may be need of me out there! (*Confidentially to NINA*) See you later? (*Exit by porch*)

KITSON. (*With authority*) What's that he said to you, Nina?

NINA. What's *what* he said to me?

KITSON. —Under his breath.

NINA. What'll you give me if I tell you?

KITSON. (*Commandingly*) I asked you a *question*.

NINA. (*Confidentially*) He said: "Don't tell Kitson."

KITSON. (*With swelling indignation*) You think you're very fine and clever, don't you, young lady? You think you can put on all the smart airs you like, don't you? And why? Why? Just because you're letting Anthony make a fool of you.

NINA. (*Irritated*) When anybody makes a fool of *me*, I'll run straight and tell you, Kitson!

KITSON. No need! I've got two eyes in my head. I've seen you half a dozen times together in the last three days, whispering and laughing; and I tell you now, I don't want to see it again.

NINA. Well, don't look!

KITSON. You'd ought to be ashamed of yourself, and him engaged to be married, and his young lady here in this very house!

NINA. Well, that's not *my* lookout, is it? I didn't bring Miss de Salle here, did I; nor her family neither, did I? And if Mr. Anthony stops now and again to exchange a word with me, in a friendly way, I for one can't see no harm in it.

KITSON. (*Solemnly*) You look out for that man.

(JUSTIN'S *voice, very angry is heard outside.*)

NINA. My goodness! (*Dashes up to porch door and glances out*) It's Mr. Geoffrey now! He's catchin' it for fair this time!—Me for the woods! (*Exits hastily*)

JUSTIN. (*Speaking off stage*) No! No! You're wrong—I say you're entirely wrong.—It is you who choose to take my words as referring to the whole question of your attitude toward Anthony. I had no wish to bring that matter up at the present time. (*Enter JUSTIN and GEOFFREY. ANTHONY is seen following*) For once, I hoped that you would consent to listen to me quietly and reasonably without flying into a passion.

GEOFFREY. (*Not ruffled*) Am I really in a passion, Dad?

(*Enter ANTHONY who stands by deferentially.*)

JUSTIN. Without flying into a passion, I said, or

assuming this air of outraged virtue which exasperates me to the last degree. (*He storms up and down the room while GEOFFREY, more puzzled than disturbed, watches him, arms folded*)

(JUSTIN RAWSON is an American gentleman of somewhat advanced middle-age; dignity and consciousness of race are bespoken in his every movement. GEOFFREY, his younger son, is a robust, outdoor fellow of twenty-four, not at all at ease amid these repressive surroundings. *His attire suggests the stock-raiser*)

ANTHONY. (*Stepping up with anxious countenance*) Father, don't take it so much to heart. I am sure Geoffrey meant nothing by it!

JUSTIN. (*To ANTHONY*) No. Nothing at all! Nothing more than he always means by his jealous, suspicious, unbrotherly behavior toward you. (*ANTHONY makes a deprecatory gesture*) You are with us for a weeks' stay, only. I insist that Geoffrey, who has nothing to do—(*GEOFFREY makes gesture of protest*)—who has nothing, I say, to do, shall exert himself toward making your visit pleasurable.

ANTHONY. But, with a few exceptions, Geoffrey has been uniformly considerate, indeed——

JUSTIN. (*Cutting him off*) I do not think the less of you, Anthony, for your readiness to defend him. But you are too generous. Be so kind as to leave us.

ANTHONY. But, Father!—I really—(*He is dismissed with a gesture, and exits to the library silently. JUSTIN suddenly perceives KITSON, who has the air of having heard nothing*)

JUSTIN. (*In controlled voice*) Kitson!

KITSON. Yes, sir.

JUSTIN. You may go.

KITSON. Yes, sir. (*Exits Left*)

JUSTIN. And now, sir—now you may tell me why you are always making occasions to slight your brother. Is it because he's three years your senior? Is it because he has devoted himself assiduously to his business and is already making a name for himself; while you have been a rolling stone, now here, now in the West, agriculturist, cowboy, sheep raiser, gentleman-farmer—anything and everything except a steady, industrious, conservative citizen!—Look at Anthony! His good habits, his manners, his respect—I might say, reverence—for his elders! Do they not make you blush for shame? (*A pause*) So for once you have nothing to say for yourself?

GEOFFREY. (*Mildly*) No, nothing—except that for the life of me I can't see what I've done to make you so angry.

JUSTIN. Angry, sir,—angry! (*Jumps to his feet with outraged manner*)

GEOFFREY. You suggested that I go for a ride with Miss de Salle. I said I had rather not. That was all.

JUSTIN. It does not occur to you that you have any obligations either toward your brother or our English guests.

GEOFFREY. I should think it was Anthony's place to go with her.

JUSTIN. You are perfectly well aware that Anthony doesn't know how to ride.

GEOFFREY. I'd be glad to teach him.

JUSTIN. *You* are the *animal-man* in this family. Anthony's *career* has occupied his attention while you have been riding your precious bronchos in New Mexico.

GEOFFREY. (*Vehemently*) Yes, and God knows I'd be there now if you hadn't asked me to come home. Do you think I *wanted* to leave the ranch? (*His face glows with longing and memory*) Oh! *That's real!*

JUSTIN. I wished you to come back and live like a civilized member of society.

GEOFFREY. It's no use.

JUSTIN. You are certainly right, so long as you insist on being sullen and offish and discourteous.

GEOFFREY. (*Earnestly*) I give you my word, Dad, I did not mean to be discourteous. (*He is embarrassed*)

JUSTIN. (*Peremptorily*) Your reason, then, for refusing to ride with Miss de Salle! She loves riding.

GEOFFREY. (*Much embarrassed*) I was busy.

JUSTIN. (*With an outburst*) Busy! With your pigs, I presume. Does it mean nothing to you that Anthony has chosen for his wife——

(*Enter by porch, Miss RAWSON, hastily.*)

MISS RAWSON. Justin! Justin! (*Indicating garden*) Mrs. Leavitt!

(*MISS RAWSON, an elderly lady of distinguished demeanor, is the image of caste-pride.*)

JUSTIN. (*Impatiently*) Mrs. Leavitt! Mrs. Leavitt's in New York.

MISS RAWSON. She came back last night.—Please, Brother——

JUSTIN. I beg your pardon. (*To GEOFFREY*) Be so good as to come into the study. (*Exit GEOFFREY, Right*) This matter's not settled yet. No! Not by any means. (*Exit JUSTIN, Right.* *MISS RAWSON goes up to meet MRS. LEAVITT, a young woman of charming, rather effusive manner, hatless, in informal morning dress*)

MISS RAWSON. It's nice to have you back again! Was it very dreadful in the city?

MRS. LEAVITT. (*With a gesture of stifling*)

Absolutely indescribable! Oh, it is heavenly to be home again!

MISS RAWSON. (*Pressing bell*) I was so anxious to have you return before the departure of our delightful guests. They are to stay until next week.

MRS. LEAVITT. I am wild to meet the future Mrs. Anthony.

MRS. RAWSON. You will love her. (*To NINA who has entered*) Nina, please tell our guests that Mrs. Leavitt is here. (*Exit NINA by stairs*) Yes, and her family too! Mrs. de Salle, a dignified woman, silent, keeping much to herself, yet not without a certain originality—some would call it eccentricity;—and Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, the older daughter, who quite answers to my ideal of an English lady,—a little formal, a little—

MRS. LEAVITT. Formal! (*Rising in dismay*) Oh, dear! What will she think of me for calling so informally! (*A gesture from MISS RAWSON reassures her*) Well I must confess to you privately—Miss Rawson, I ran away from home.

MISS RAWSON. Ran away?

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Gaily*) Yes. A fugitive. I was having cold chills.

MISS RAWSON. What do you mean?

MRS. LEAVITT. (*In lowered voice*) You know we are planning a simple little memorial at Woodlawn for Mr. Leavitt's mother; and this morning by the first train—Oh, quite without being asked to come, I assure you,—who should turn up but this strange creature; Swallow, his name is,—representing some tombstone firm in Hoboken, New Jersey!—He appeared before the gates of Willowfields at nine A. M. and evidently intends staying until the crack of doom.

JUSTIN. (*Heard off Right*) Wrong! Wrong! Radically, essentially, totally wrong!

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Startled*) Goodness, what's that?

MISS RAWSON. (*Trying to explain*) It's only Justin. He does not always find—Geoffrey—

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Consolingly*) Yes, I know so well! Many things must be hard for both of you! Yet after all, you have much to be thankful for! *Anthony* is doing so very well.

MISS RAWSON. *Anthony* is a *Rawson*!—Well, *Nina*! (*To NINA who has re-entered by stairs*)

NINA. Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh presents her compliments, Madam, and says they will be down directly. (*Exit*)

MRS. LEAVITT. Bumpstead-Leigh! what a fascinating name—it seems to mean so much! And I understand the Reverend Algernon Bumpstead-Leigh is one of those British younger sons who has entered the Church and is directly in line for Bishop's orders and the House of Lords. I read all about it last night in the Evening Chronicle.

MISS RAWSON. (*Horried*) The Evening Chronicle!

MRS. LEAVITT. Yes, didn't you know? There was fully half a column on the society page.

MISS RAWSON. Oh, no! It is too horrible! Must our personal affairs be hawked and peddled about the streets? The thought makes me ill!

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Disconcerted*) Oh, but you mustn't let it trouble you so, dear Miss Rawson. There was nothing more than a hint of the engagement; the tone and all was perfectly inoffensive.

MISS RAWSON. It isn't that; oh, it isn't that! No, it's the idea of having *our family* connected in any way, shape, or manner with the vulgar, sensational press of the present day.

MRS. LEAVITT. Yes, yes, I understand.

MISS RAWSON. We must not let a word of this wretched affair get to the de Salles. They are even

more conservative than we. Why, until they knew absolutely the origin and standing of Anthony's family, they would not *think* of ratifying the engagement. It was for that reason they consented to cross the ocean with him.

MRS. LEAVITT. Oh, I see. And of course, they are satisfied.

MISS RAWSON. Yes. They are satisfied. So are we. Everything about them pleases me. The Rectory occupied by the Bumpstead-Leighs in Trumpington-on-Swell is restored from an old monastery of the early Tudor period. From attic to cellar it is filled with old oak panelling, ancient plate, ancestral portraits——

MRS. LEAVITT. Of the Bumpstead-Leighs or the de Salles?

MISS RAWSON. The de Salles are American.

MRS. LEAVITT. American!

MISS RAWSON. Yes, in origin; that is one cause for my being especially drawn to them; yet the name is Norman-French—that means something.

MRS. LEAVITT. What a fascinating blend!

MISS RAWSON. Yes, the girls were born in this country—Washington, I think—but they have always lived on the other side; educated at the most exclusive *pensions*; speaking several languages; combining, one might say, a moral heritage which is truly American with the charm and culture of the older civilization.

MRS. LEAVITT. How well you put it, Miss Rawson!

MISS RAWSON. If I do, it is only because I feel so deeply what it all means in this day and age. The typical American young woman of to-day, with her manners that are anything but manners, her bold forward speech, her smartness, her slang,—downright *illiteracy*, that is what I call it; and as for *family*, it has all but perished from the face of

the earth! (*Checking her own vehemence*) Oh, I know I am quite out of date; the world has changed—I do not say gone forward—since I was a girl; but there are a few things I insist upon, and I shall continue to insist upon them as long as I can insist upon anything. *Family* heads the list!

MRS. LEAVITT. Then no wonder you welcome the de Salles.

MISS RAWSON. And for more than one reason. Anthony was truly impressed by the home life of the Bumpstead-Leighs. The devotion of Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh to her husband is very beautiful. And, of course, though I do not care to insist upon the point, it does mean something to us, that in Trumpington-on-Swell Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh is the acknowledged social leader. So now you can understand why we welcome the de Salles and regard the union as one I may say peculiarly happy and suitable.

(*In the course of this last speech MRS. BUMPSTEAD-LEIGH has descended the stairs as far as the landing and has stood there, unseen by the other ladies, until the suitable moment should come for interrupting their conversation. She concludes that the moment has now come and descends the remaining stairs with cordial, vivid, yet slightly patronizing eagerness. MRS. BUMPSTEAD-LEIGH (ADELAIDE) is an exceedingly British lady still in her early thirties. She is handsome, polished, radiant, electrical, mental; and there is a born domination, a concealed aggressiveness in her demeanor which suggests that it would not be desirable nor perhaps quite safe to antagonize her. You recognize her instantly as a leader, a commander. Gracious, affable always, you sense the iron underneath.*)

ADELAIDE. (*In her most voluble British manner*) Oh, I do love your American way of paying calls in the morning. It is so deliciously informal, so *en famille!*—or perhaps, I err in thinking so? Surely it is not the usual, the prescribed hour.—Yet why not? Why should not one devote these brightest and choicest moments of the day to social intercourse I do not know a fitter use for them. (*Greeting MRS. LEAVITT with a warmth which yet does not lack condescension*) With Mrs. Leavitt, I am sure, I need not insist upon a formal introduction. I have heard so many charming things of you from your amiable husband, Mr. Leavitt. I am truly charmed to make your acquaintance.

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Overwhelmed*) Perfectly—delighted!

ADELAIDE. (*To MISS RAWSON*) I am so very, very sorry to precede Mamma and Violet. I only consented to come down upon their express promise to follow directly.

MISS RAWSON. (*To MRS. LEAVITT*) Violet was off for a long tramp, all by herself, before breakfast. (*To ADELAIDE*) I do hope that she was not over-fatigued.

ADELAIDE. Oh, no—not at all, and so very kind of you to think of it. Violet is like all our English girls, in her love for the free, outdoor life. But your morning sun over here—I don't know I am sure how to account for it—seems to radiate a peculiarly burning, exhausting heat.—I wonder, might there be some scientific explanation for that?

(*ANTHONY has just entered from porch. He hastily scrutinizes the group and seems dissatisfied.*)

ANTHONY. How do you do, Mrs. Leavitt! (*Coming to her*)

MRS. LEAVITT. My dear Anthony! How well

you are looking! (*Taking his hand effusively*) Congratulations! Sincere congratulations! We are so awfully glad!

ANTHONY. (*To MRS. LEAVITT rather absently*) Thank you, thank you. (*To ADELAIDE*) But where is Violet?

ADELAIDE. She will be down in a minute.

ANTHONY. (*With feigned indifference*) Of course she knows that Mrs. Leavitt is here?

(*MRS. DE SALLE has entered by stairs.*)

ADELAIDE. (*Brightly*) Mamma comes next!—the order is climactic.

ANTHONY. (*Repeating this time to MRS. DE SALLE*) Violet has been told of course that Mrs. Leavitt is here?

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Embarrassed*) Oh, yes, a dozen times! I'm sure she'll come down right away.

(*The grand manner sits somehow rather grotesquely on MRS. DE SALLE and like her clothes, which are irreproachably elegant, seems not altogether to be hers by original right. Underneath her well-groomed, well-polished impressiveness you might detect an acute, unceasing anxiety, an apprehension of well, I don't know quite what, but something.*)

ADELAIDE. (*With vivid emphasis as if to prevent the possibility of MRS. DE SALLE saying more*) Perhaps she was a trifle over-tired by her tramp. Though there is not the slightest cause for apprehension.

MRS. DE SALLE. Oh, not the slightest cause for apprehension.

(*And we cannot fail to notice how eagerly she seizes every opportunity to echo the perfectly safe pronouncements of her daughter.*)

MISS RAWSON. (*Rising*) Mrs. de Salle, permit me to introduce Mrs. Leavitt.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*With a shadow of ADELAIDE's manner*) Very charmed.

MRS. LEAVITT. Delighted!—How interesting that your daughter should be devoted to walking. Is she a great nature-lover?

MRS. DE SALLE. Oh no! She has always been perfectly healthy.

ADELAIDE. (*Seating herself with a compellingly gracious air*) I do not know what it can precisely be about our young English girls.—Though almost invariably enjoying the best of health, they seem to lack a certain rugged, brute vigor that I find everywhere amongst your girls of America.

MISS RAWSON. Indeed!

ADELAIDE. Your American girls constantly strike me with wonder; they are so lithe, so muscular, with their great splendid hands, and feet, divinely intended, one might say, without a shadow of irreverence, for struggle with your more elemental conditions over here.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Approvingly*) Yes. Elemental!

ADELAIDE. I seem to be watching a parade of magnificent animals! Am I correctly informed, Anthony, that in certain of your institutions of learning for young women, the students meet regularly in football contests with antagonists of the opposite sex?

ANTHONY. I question it.

ADELAIDE. Ça me donne les frissons!—yet why? Only because, in imagination, I seem to see *our* girls so engaged. And the thought comes; has not the American young woman inherited many of the best traits of the Indian women—what was the scientific term for them? Paposes?—that preceded her?

MISS RAWSON. (*Horried but impressed*) Of

course, there is no actual blood-relationship between them.

ADELAIDE. Surely not! Oh, surely not! And yet family, here in America, impresses us English as being such an odd, tangled sort of affair!

MISS RAWSON. (*Who finds her own sentiments echoed*) No doubt!

ADELAIDE. I mean to say—One never knows to whom one may be related! As Lady Fitzhugh was remarking to me one day—Anthony, you will recall Lady Fitzhugh?—

ANTHONY. Yes, of course!

ADELAIDE. One of the most charming creatures in the world—and a Granville!—"Dearest Adelaide," she exclaimed, in that odd, emphatic manner of hers, "do all American women marry their fathers' chauffeurs, and all American men their mothers' cook?"

MISS RAWSON. Dear, dear!

ADELAIDE. "By no means always," I replied. "Sometimes they remarry them,"—intending, by that little emendation, to allude to the shocking frequency of divorce in this country.

MISS RAWSON. It is shocking!

ADELAIDE. Lady Fitzhugh, I may add, apprehended my meaning instantly, and went on to speak, with the utmost kindness and amiability, of a sermon my husband had delivered the previous Sunday upon the sanctity of the marriage bond.

MISS RAWSON. A good subject!

ADELAIDE. "I am proud," said she, "that our dear Algernon takes so sound a view of this solemn institution! When he is appointed *Bishop of Highchester*, we shall expect some notable utterances on these pressing social questions."

(*From the study is heard the voice of JUSTIN.*)

JUSTIN. No! No! Not a word!

ANTHONY. Oh, I hope Father is not being severe with Geoffrey.

MISS RAWSON. Your Father is the soul of Justice!

ADELAIDE. He is indeed! Mr. Rawson has quite the English sense of equity. So different in that respect from our popular idea of the Yankee.

MRS. DE SALLE. Yes, so different.

ADELAIDE. When I return to Staffordshire, I promise you I shall do my best to correct those false and libellous misconceptions. You can have no idea what strange beings the Americans are thought to be, even by our upper classes!

MRS. LEAVITT. Oh, I suppose not.

ADELAIDE. I recall very well how our friend, Lord Clitheroe, asked me one day: "Is it true that the accepted Yankee method of execution is by the lynch?" I hastened to assure him that, though I had not visited the States since my girlhood, such I knew to be not the case. "The law," I said, "is held in the highest respect in the older parts of the country, near the Coast." I shall be able to speak even more emphatically after my return, for I may truly say, I have seen no lawlessness, no bloodshed, no violence of any sort whatever during my present visit here.

ANTHONY. We are fortunate in having such a devoted champion.

ADELAIDE. Ah, you are too kind. England is the home of my adoption, but I can never forget what I owe to America.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Echoingly*) No! never! (*Telephone rings*)

MRS. LEAVITT. Oh, that is Mr. Leavitt—excuse me. (*Goes to 'phone*)

MISS RAWSON. (*To the DE SALLES*) The private wire brings friends even closer.

MRS. LEAVITT. (*At 'phone*) Yes? Is that you, Stephen?

ADELAIDE. (*To MRS. DE SALLE*) Dear Mamma, I do believe we must have one between the Rectory and Lady Fitzhugh's. It would be such a convenience.

MRS. LEAVITT. (*At 'phone*) Very well, I'll come over at once. (*Returning to MISS RAWSON*) I'm so sorry, but my advice is wanted at home; so I shall have to put off meeting Miss de Salle until another time, after all.

ADELAIDE. She will be inconsolable.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Echoing*) Yes—inconsolable!

MISS RAWSON. (*Accompanying MRS. LEAVITT to porch*) My dear, couldn't you and Stephen come over to lunch? We'll have it on the porch. There is such a lovely picnic flavor in the air to-day.

ANTHONY. (*Joining them*) Let me second the invitation!

MRS. LEAVITT. Why, yes, it would be sweet. We'll be delighted!

(*Exeunt MRS. LEAVITT, ANTHONY and MISS RAWSON, by porch.*)

MISS RAWSON. (*As they go*) Then we shall look for you about one.

(*Their voices are heard outside as they leave the porch. MRS. DE SALLE is following them vaguely with somewhat the air of a Guilty Thing and as if hoping to avoid being left alone with her brilliant daughter. But she has not reached the porch door before she is halted dead in her tracks by a peremptory command from ADELAIDE.*)

ADELAIDE. MA!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Turning as if expecting a whipping*) Yes. Della?

ADELAIDE. Where you going?

MRS. DE SALLE. Nowhere.

ADELAIDE. Come here! (MRS. DE SALLE *comes*) What the dickens has got into Violet? (*Her voice is scarcely recognisable in its raw, almost strident American homespun*)

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Wringing her hands*) Oh, I'm sure I haven't an idea!

ADELAIDE. Whatever it is, it's got to be knocked out, and no delay! If Ollie don't attend to business, she'll mull everything!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Weakly protesting*) Oh I'm sure—Della——

ADELAIDE. (*Commandingly*) Now look here! Are you backin' her up?

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Collapsing*) Della, I don't know *what* I'm a-doin'.

ADELAIDE. Humph! The usual situation! If you'd once learned to know what you were doing, you wouldn't have played so beautifully into the hands of that cat-eyed peddlar of slanders, Lady Fitzhugh!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Aghast*) Lady Fitzhugh! I never told a thing to Lady Fitzhugh! I didn't, I didn't! (*Sits helpless*)

ADELAIDE. To be sure! Of course not! But for all that, Lady Fitzhugh managed very neatly to worm out of you that we came from Missionary Loop, Indiana, and that Dad made every cent he had out of patent medicine.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*On her feet*) I never!—I never said a word about the Sayles's Favorite Stomach Elixir, or the Sissapoola Indian Herb remedies! Nothing in the world would make me open my mouth!

ADELAIDE. (*Curtly*) Rats, Ma! You know you

just handed over everything she wanted to serve for all her nasty innuendoes. Oh, I can hear her ringin' 'em out now! "So they came to England to find husbands! I wonder now what can be the reason for it!—considering who they were, and all!"—Ugh! Oh, why, *why* did I ever leave you alone for five minutes!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Plaintively*) Oh, why did you—why did you?

ADELAIDE. Might have known it would mean ruin!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Horried*) Ruin!

ADELAIDE. (*Crisply*) That's what I'm facing at the present moment. (*Showing envelope*) Do you know what's in this letter I got from Algernon last night?

MRS. DE SALLE. (*With a gulp of horror*) No!

ADELAIDE. It's come to *his* ears at last. Oh, it was sure to in time with Lady Fitzhugh at the guns! He's insulted, distressed—all that a faithful husband should be—but—he calls on me to deny everything. "Cable reply"—that's the postscript.

MRS. DE SALLE. "Cable reply!"

ADELAIDE. So now you see just where we are, and it's a good tight place!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Gasping*) Did you answer it?

ADELAIDE. I did.—One word—"Lies."

MRS. DE SALLE. But—(*Rising and sitting again*)

ADELAIDE. But nothing! I didn't say "All Lies." I said, "Lies". Half of what that gassy old windbag of a Fitzhugh says is sure to be lies, anyhow.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Cheeringly*) But now, I reckon this match of Ollie's 'll stop her mouth.

ADELAIDE. Yes! Yes! (*Bitterly*) "This match of Ollie's!" That comes well from you just at the moment when you're doing your best to smash it.

MRS. DE SALLE. Me!

ADELAIDE. Look here! Don't you see, you've got to set to and help me manage Ollie? Why didn't you *make* her come down?

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Whimpering*) I got on my knees to her, Dell.

ADELAIDE. Sh!—(ANTHONY *is seen entering by porch*) Now you pack off upstairs and have Violet here in five minutes. Understand? Don't be a jelly-fish!—There! (MRS. DE SALLE *exits helplessly by the stairs*. ADELAIDE *turns quickly and goes with a manner of comprehending sympathy to ANTHONY, once more the irreproachable, unapproachable* MRS. BUMPSTEAD-LEIGH, *and holding out her hands to him she exclaims:*) My dear boy!—Something is wrong!

ANTHONY. (*Sullenly*) There's something I don't understand.

ADELAIDE. Tell me, frankly, candidly, as brother to sister—there has been no—no difference?

ANTHONY. Not a shadow.

ADELAIDE. Might it not be merely the effect of excitement—the fag, the novelty of everything?

ANTHONY. Is that a reason for avoiding me?

ADELAIDE. Of course not—and yet—

ANTHONY. Let me tell you!—Since I first observed the change in her, I have been more attentive than usual, and yet she is unresponsive,—cold!

ADELAIDE. It is only a phase,—a mere transient little phase, nothing more, Anthony dear, believe me. Of her love you are sure.—You must be patient!

ANTHONY. (*With dignity*) I have been patient! She knows that Mrs. Leavitt wished to meet her and she refused to come down. It was an affront.

ADELAIDE. Tell her frankly what you think! Perhaps you will discover the trouble—and if not, let me try. But be very tender with her!—

(*At this moment, VIOLET DE SALLE enters by the stairs. She is a sweet, straight-forward girl of eighteen, naturally candid and sincere. Her manner is unaffected and cultivated. She hesitates; then comes reluctantly toward ADELAIDE.*)

VIOLET. You wished to see me, Adelaide?

ADELAIDE. (*Sweetly*) Yes,—that is, no, not now. There *was* something I wished to ask you, but it can wait. (*Glancing at her watch*)—For I promised Geoffrey to visit his kennels. I am a bit late. (*Going*)

VIOLET. (*Uneasily*) Oh, mayn't I come with you?

ADELAIDE. (*With gentle authority*) Oh, no, Violet dear! It would be most imprudent after your tiresome walk this morning. You must remain quietly indoors until after lunch. (*Her eyes smile gently upon her sister; but if you look you may see one hand kindly placed on VIOLET's shoulder suddenly stiffen as it imparts a vigorous push to the unwilling girl. And with this, she exits, to porch*)

ANTHONY. (*After a moment's silent regard of the girl, who does not return his gaze*) Violet, do you know that you have caused me a great deal of pain?

VIOLET. (*With timid concern*) Oh, have I, Anthony? I'm so sorry. It hasn't been intentional. Indeed it hasn't!

ANTHONY. (*Sharpening*) Do you mean to say that your failure to appear just now was unintentional.

VIOLET. (*Simply*) Yes, truly, I meant to come.

ANTHONY. Then why didn't you?

VIOLET. (*Faintly*) I don't know.—I—I seemed to want to be alone.

ANTHONY. (*With irony*) You seem to want to

be alone often of late. What about this solitary expedition over the dunes before breakfast?

VIOLET. I wanted to think.

ANTHONY. (*Positively*) Something's the matter.

VIOLET. (*Frightened*) Oh—no!

ANTHONY. (*Putting his arm about her endearingly, shows her to the sofa where they sit*) Come! I've got you all to myself at last. We must talk! Sit down. Violet, you are not like yourself. Tell me, are you hiding something? Have you been naughty? Eh? Have you? Have you? (*He insists wheelingly and ends by kissing her in rather a lavish manner*)

VIOLET. (*Freeing herself with a little cry*) Oh!

ANTHONY. Why, what's wrong?

VIOLET. (*Faintly*) I thought I heard someone.

ANTHONY. Well, what of it? Need we be ashamed? Isn't our love noble, divinely ordained? Moments like these, when I speak to you as to my second self, are the summits of life; delectable mountains from which, hand in hand, we look into new, untraveled lands, behold transporting visions of beauty and truth!

(*It would be quite proper and natural, of course, for*

VIOLET to be swept away by these choice phrases, but for some reason or other, she only replies, rather feebly:)

VIOLET. What a vocabulary you have, Anthony.

ANTHONY. (*Fondly*) Only when you inspire me, darling! Without you I am mute. You are like some rare, precious wine. When I put you to my lips, a new joy, an inspiration, a feeling of exuberant vitality sweeps over me. The World does not know me, Violet! It thinks me sedate, cold, passionless,—clever too, perhaps,—

VIOLET. (*Faintly*) Oh, yes, very clever, Anthony; everyone speaks of that.

ANTHONY. People say, "There is a man with a future; a man who will make his mark some day!" But, of my true self, beloved, what does the world know? Nothing!—That is for you!—(*Warming to her*) None but you has ever stirred those slumbering fires——

VIOLET. (*Jumping nervously up*) Oh, there is Adelaide!

ADELAIDE. (*Entering gaily*) Have you Americans that droll old saying about a bad penny always turning up again? Well, here I am.

VIOLET. (*Eagerly*) Did you see the dogs, Della? Oh, aren't they the sweetest dears?

ADELAIDE. No, I didn't see the dogs. Geoffrey met a man who wanted to buy a pig.—Really, Anthony, your brother is by way of being quite a farmer, is not he!

ANTHONY. (*With veiled contempt*) The pigs are the most recent addition to his stock, I believe.

VIOLET. Oh, they are heavenly pigs, Della! There's one old mother who took a prize at the County Fair, and she has seven of the darlindest little pink babies. Geoffrey let me pick one up.

ADELAIDE. (*Horried*) Violet!

VIOLET. Why not? It has the cutest little face,—exactly like a little wee baby.—Geoffrey promised I should take it back to Trumpington-on-Swall.

ADELAIDE. (*Burying her face*) Oh! Oh!

ANTHONY. (*Jealously*) Strange, I have heard nothing of all these expeditions to the kennels and the pig pens.

VIOLET. (*Innocently*) I didn't suppose you'd care to come, Anthony. I'm sorry if I have displeased you.

ANTHONY. (*Rather grandly*) Oh, not at all—not at all.

(VIOLET goes thoughtfully to the window, Left, and stands there looking out.)

ADELAIDE. Since *Chantecler*, barnyards have come quite into good odour. I believe.—Oh, Anthony, I had all but forgotten! Mr. Leavitt was inquiring for you,—some little business matter, he said. I promised to tell you. He is in the library, I think.

ANTHONY. (*Going*) With your permission, Violet?

(VIOLET makes no rejoinder.)

ADELAIDE. (*Apart to ANTHONY, as he passes her*) Did you get any clue? (ANTHONY *shakes his head*) Leave it to me. (*Exit ANTHONY. For a moment, ADELAIDE silently watches her sister; then with decision she abruptly challenges her, and her manner is once more that of the ambitious but untutored daughter of Indiana*) Ollie, you've kicked up enough how-do-do in the last forty-eight hours to smash everything! I guess you'd better give me some explanations, young lady!

VIOLET. (*Mildly*) I don't know what you mean.

ADELAIDE. (*With extreme disgust*) Stuff and nonsense, girl! Do you take me for a blind bat?

VIOLET. (*Innocently*) I haven't intended to offend him.

ADELAIDE. (*Unspeakably contemptuous*) And pray, is *that* your recipe for holding on to a man! If any girl but my own sister said such a fool thing, I'd consign her to the psychopathic ward and be done with it. What have you been toted around Europe for all these years, if not to learn how to play the game? You've hooked a fish—I grant you, though the credit's more mine than yours! But he ain't in the frying pan yet, by a long sight, an' don't you forget it!

VIOLET. (*Hurt*) Della, please.

ADELAIDE. (*Throwing arms about her with affectionate manner*) There, there, dear! I may be too blunt; but after all, it's only because I'm thinking of what's best for you. Come, let's talk it over quietly!—Ollie, I want you to *trust* me. Is that wantin' too much? What has come between us lately? I feel as if I hardly knew ye any more. Perhaps you think I don't care, but I *do*,—Violet, I do care.

VIOLET. (*Yielding to sudden sobs, while she leans her head on ADELAIDE's bosom*) Oh, Della, I'm so unhappy! I wish I were dead!

ADELAIDE. (*With shrewd smile of triumph—as she tenderly pats her*) Tell your old sister all about it.

VIOLET. I used to think it didn't matter; but now—just these last few days,—oh, it's been making me feel so ashamed and humiliated to be deceiving everybody like this.

ADELAIDE. Deceiving everybody?—(*Pause*) Why, what do you mean, Violet?

VIOLET. (*With accusing eyes*) You know what I mean!

ADELAIDE. Indeed I do *not*!—*Whom* have you been deceiving?

VIOLET. Anthony, Geoffrey, Miss Rawson!—*everybody*!

ADELAIDE. (*Hardening a little*) Ye have! What have you been deceivin' 'em about?

VIOLET. (*Withdrawing into herself*) It's no use!—I don't think I could make you see it my way.

ADELAIDE. (*Seeming deeply wounded*) Oh, Violet! What have I done to get treated like this?

VIOLET. (*Softening again*) I didn't mean it that way. It's only—you know as well as I do, that if these people knew all about us, and who we were, they wouldn't have us here for anything in the world.

ADELAIDE. Now look me straight in the eye!—Do you honestly think yourself their inferior?

VIOLET. (*Thoughtfully*) No—but that's not the point!

ADELAIDE. (*Bitingly*) The point is: You think we ought to tell them all about Sayles's Favorite Stomach Elixir, and the Sissapoola Indian Herb Remedies!

VIOLET. (*Shuddering*) I don't think I could, even if I thought I ought to.

ADELAIDE. (*Remorselessly*) You'd like them to know how, on every bottle, was emblazoned the picture of our lamented sire—thus!—(*Raising one hand, as if in blessing, and assuming a grotesquely benignant countenance*) over the words: "Old Jim Sayles, the Sufferer's Friend." (*With a groan*) Land sakes! Isn't it expiation enough to have lived—only to have *lived* with that till I was twenty years old, without forcing me now to rake up the hideous recollections! How they used to guy me about it, even in Missionary Loop! (*Imitating a native of her native town*) "Wa'l, wa'l! So you be old Jim Sayles's gal! Say, I hear tell as how up to your hum, they gives ye Stomach Elixir on yer pancakes."—Are we accountable for what our Dad happened to be and what he happened to do? Is that *our* fault? Are we *branded*? Thank God, no! That's *done* with! We've paid the price! For everything we've gained, we've paid the price!

VIOLET. (*With conviction but very simply*) Not honestly!

ADELAIDE. (*Urgently, with equal conviction*) Yes, honestly! Didn't the most expensive heraldic bureau in New York say we had a perfect right to the name de Salle? Didn't they say it could be proved definitely that somebody or other back a few hundred years was named that?—Well, there's no criminality so far, *is there*! And then we went to

Washington without a friend in the world. Mother rented the house on Lafayette Circle, and you and I attended the swellest day school in the city. How I worked to lay on a little culture and style and *savoir faire* for those two awful years! You were a youngster. *You* escaped all that!—

VIOLET. (*With ironic emphasis*) Oh, I remember! It wasn't until the second year that any of the girls at Miss Westleigh's would be seen with me.

ADELAIDE. Very likely not! But before we *quit* Washington, mother had a visiting list with thirty-four *bona fide* names on it—two senator's wives, and the wife of the Secretary of the French Embassy. That's something! And through Madame Epervier we got a little foothold in Paris; and then on, and on, one step after another! I've worked like a horse for everybody!—Well, haven't I! Where would *you* be to-day, I'd like to know, if it wasn't for me? Eh? Answer me that, will you. (VIOLET *is silent*) Very likely the wife of Missionary Loop's most popular grocer. And every night about bedtime, while he'd be sittin' in front of the base burner in his stockin' feet, you'd be havin' a nice piece o' apple pie together! Perhaps you'd be Secretary of the Missionary Loop Culture Club! That *would* be something to live for, wouldn't it!

VIOLET. (*Distressed*) Oh, Della! How *can* you!

ADELAIDE. Well, I'm merely reminding you of where you might have been if I hadn't put my shoulder to the wheel and set to work to *do* something, and to *get* somewhere. Ten years at hard labor, that was the sentence I imposed on myself; and now I ask you to look about you and say if I can't show results! How about Ma? Haven't I made her over into a thoroughly presentable personage?—If she'd only keep her mouth shut?—Haven't I made a match for myself that a thousand

American girls with family trees and five times our money would sell their souls for? Now haven't I?

VIOLET. (*Admiring perforce*) You have done handsomely, Dell.

ADELAIDE. And I haven't left one single stone unturned to do as well for you! What could you ask for better than Anthony Rawson? My land, girl, if you think all this has been child's play, you're mistaken—very much mistaken! And who have I done it for? Myself?

VIOLET. (*Simply*) Della, I do honestly feel grateful to you, even when I don't seem to show it.

ADELAIDE. (*Indulgently*) There, there! Say nothing more about it. And now I hope that affair is settled once and for all—Eh?—(*Pause*) Well?

VIOLET. There's something else.—Something a great deal more important.

ADELAIDE. (*Crisply*) I thought so!—Now, we're getting at it!—(*With dry emphasis*) You don't love Anthony any more!

VIOLET. (*Startled*) Oh,—how could you guess?

ADELAIDE. I'm a crystal-gazer, dear.

VIOLET. (*Simply*) I don't know whether I ever really loved him. I used to think I did—at least *enough*—but now—Oh, I can't bear to have him *come near me*!

ADELAIDE. (*Curtly*) In other words, he's not what you took him for!

VIOLET. (*Timidly*) Very likely, I'm wrong about it.

ADELAIDE. (*Matter-of-fact*) No, you're right about it!

VIOLET. (*Crushed*) Oh, it's too dreadful!

ADELAIDE. (*With positive, clear pronouncement*) No it's not!—You've simply found out the truth; and it's bound to be hard—for a week or two! He *isn't* what you thought him. Not one man in a dozen is what a nice woman would like to think

him. He's selfish, he's greedy, he's egotistical; and the more he fiddle-diddles about the beauty and sacredness of love, the more you'd better look out for him!

VIOLET. (*With dismay*) Oh! How can you bear to live!

ADELAIDE. (*With buoyant conviction*) Oh, I decided quite a long time ago—just as you are going to decide—that there's something—*very—well—worth—living for—after all!* (*Measuring each word*)

VIOLET. Yes?

ADELAIDE. To strike—the best bargain—with the world—you can! Now listen to me while I tell you something. Do you remember Pete Swallow, of Missionary Loop? (*Yes, she actually pronounces it: Swallah*)

VIOLET. Was he the man who used to show me the pictures of tombstones with urns and weeping willows on top?

ADELAIDE. I was engaged to Pete. (*Without the slightest hesitation or sentiment, even with a perception of the humor of the story*) I thought I loved him—loved him in the approved, turtle-dove way—*your way*. Well, Pete Swallow taught me a whole lot of things. He was a good teacher, and when I'd studied under him long enough, I decided I could strike a better bargain elsewhere.—*I did!*

VIOLET. Oh, Della!

ADELAIDE. (*Matter-of-fact*) Oh, don't misunderstand me! I know Algernon's stupid; I know he's petty and narrow-minded and egotistical; but he's *exactly the kind of a husband I happen to want*, so I'm satisfied! Now here's *your* bargain—not a mark-down, department-store affair, either. But a *Prize! A blue-ribboner!* And it's your business to *take it* and to keep a *hold* of it.

VIOLET. (*On verge of collapse*) Oh, Della, I can't.

ADELAIDE. "Can't": *must!* (*Softening*) What you need, my dear, is just a little scrap o' common sense! You're asking for better bread than wheat makes; and you won't get it in this world. You want the moon to be always full; you want, "Hertz und Schmerz" all the time. Well, that's not real life! That's story-books. (*Rising*) Turtle doves never get anywhere. They always roost on the ridge-pole. That don't suit me; and it wouldn't suit you very long—I know you too well for that! So put these silly notions out of your little head, like the sensible girl you are, and *play up!* That's the word for the woman who intends to make a success of life. Play up! Life's not such a bad game after all!—Now look at me, and tell me you're going to do the right thing.

VIOLET. (*Faintly and without conviction*) I'll try.

ADELAIDE. Good! That's the way I like to hear you speak! Now I must run upstairs and dash off a line for to-morrow's boat; and when I come down, I shall expect to find you out in the garden, with the others, *playing up!*—Ta-ta! (*Exit*)

(VIOLET remains seated in pensive silence.)

GEOFFREY. (*Entering from porch and not perceiving her the first instant*) Oh, I didn't know you were in here. (*He is going out again as if preferring not to talk with her, then halts*) Great Scott! You look awfully down. Is something the matter?

VIOLET. (*With dejected simplicity*) Yes.

GEOFFREY. (*Fraternally*) What?

VIOLET. Everything.

GEOFFREY. (*Sitting*) Same here!

VIOLET. (*Inquiringly*) Yes? (*Sympathetically*) Oh, I'm sorry!

GEOFFREY. You know, I've about decided I'm kind—of a sort—of a misfit.

VIOLET. I *know* I'm one.

GEOFFREY. I'm thinking about making a move.

VIOLET. Oh, are you?—So—so am I.

GEOFFREY. I think it would be a lot better for everybody concerned if I cut out and hit the trail for New Mexico.

VIOLET. (*With involuntary eagerness*) It must be lovely on a ranch!

GEOFFREY. (*With enthusiasm*) You're right!—it's great! It's so blamed *real*!—(*Checking himself*) Not that that means anything to you!

VIOLET. (*With involuntary exclamation*) Oh, but it does!—more than you think! (*A silence which becomes dangerously full of meaning. Finally as if rousing herself from enthralment VIOLET tries to resume casual blithe manner*) Don't—don't you think it would be nice outside—with the others?

GEOFFREY. (*Adopting her mood, with an effort*) Corking! Come on!

(*They are going. Enter Right, LEAVITT and ANTHONY.*)

ANTHONY. (*With veiled inuendo*) Oh, you were just going?

VIOLET. (*With cordial manner*) Yes, out to the pergola.—Good-morning, Mr. Leavitt!

LEAVITT. Good-morning!—Hello, Jeff!

GEOFFREY. Hello!

VIOLET. Won't you come along, too?

ANTHONY. Mr. Leavitt and I were just discussing a little business matter.

VIOLET. (*To GEOFFREY*) Come on then, we're dismissed! (*Laughing rather nervously, she exits with GEOFFREY*)

(ANTHONY goes up to porch and watches GEOFFREY and VIOLET as they disappear.)

LEAVITT. (*Puzzled and a little irritated*) Well, it may not interest you, Anthony; but there's the story! Take it for what it's worth.

ANTHONY. I couldn't believe a word of it. It is preposterous, absurd, utterly impossible. (*Returns to LEAVITT and they sit*)

LEAVITT. I agree with you. A mere coincidence, of course; yet certainly a strange one.

ANTHONY. He was sure the name was de Salle?

LEAVITT. Yes, quite positive. It was when my wife mentioned to me that she had failed to meet Miss de Salle, after all, that this Swallow spoke up so suddenly: "De Salle, de Salle—look here, where does this de Salle come from? Washington, D. C.?" I said I believed the de Salles had once lived there.

(NINA has entered Left, with a large vase of flowers; but when she observes the men in confidential talk, she sets the vase on the piano and busies herself arranging the flowers, while eavesdropping.)

ANTHONY. (*Thoughtfully*) I see—and then he went on to tell you about this Sayles family?

LEAVITT. No—not right away. Not until we were alone. Then he began talking about this Della Sayles to whom he had been engaged. It was after the death of the father—the patent medicine man—that the family moved away, and beyond the one fact that they went to Washington under the name of de Salle, he was perfectly ignorant.

ANTHONY. He did not know the younger sister's name?

LEAVITT. (*Searching his memory*) He said they always called her—Ollie.

ANTHONY. Ollie! Ollie! I am sure I have heard it. (*Sternly*) Oh! But it is incredible! It cannot be true!

LEAVITT. Of course! But as a friend I thought it my duty to tell you.

ANTHONY. (*Absently*) Thank you! Thank you! I suspect we owe it to ourselves—and to the de Salles—to investigate this story.

LEAVITT. You will go to Mrs. de Salle?

ANTHONY. (*Thoughtfully*) No—that would be unpleasant,—unpleasant in either event.

LEAVITT. What is your plan?

ANTHONY. A simple one: bring Swallow here.

LEAVITT. Here!

ANTHONY. Confront him with the de Salles.

LEAVITT. But how would you explain things?

ANTHONY. Leave that to me. Mrs. Leavitt does not know of this?

LEAVITT. Not a word.

ANTHONY. Good. I will manage it so that no suspicions will be aroused. Yes, that's it. Bring Swallow over here to lunch.

LEAVITT. At one? But he goes by the 1:17.

ANTHONY. So much the better—we will not detain him!—A minute—a second, will tell the story. (*NINA withdraws*) But do not misunderstand me, Leavitt—(*Rather sternly*) I entertain no suspicions whatever. (*They go up*) I simply feel that in view of what you have told me—we owe it—to our guests—to put the story to the proof.

LEAVITT. (*With guarded agreement*) I see.

ANTHONY. Thank you for coming to me in this way. I appreciate it.

LEAVITT. I knew you would understand my motive. (*At door*) Well I will have your man for you. Good-bye!

ANTHONY. Au revoir! and thank you again! (*LEAVITT exits. ANTHONY stands an instant in the*

doorway, thinking with rather a crafty expression. NINA enters Left, with another vase of flowers) What's your hurry, my dear?

NINA. (*Halting coquettishly*) I'm fixing the flowers, Mr. Anthony—Aren't they pretty?

ANTHONY. (*Coming close*) Yes, but not half so pretty as the face behind them.

NINA. (*Turning archly away*) Oh, Mr. Anthony, you're kidding again.

ANTHONY. Why so coy? You know what I want, you little lump—This! (*Catches her and kisses her*)

NINA. (*Squealing softly*) Ow!

ANTHONY. (*Releasing her*) Don't you know it's very wrong to make a row when a gentleman pays you a compliment? You should always keep as quiet as a mouse. Now, once more!

NINA. (*Feigning to protect herself with vase of flowers*) No, sir!

ADELAIDE. (*Upstairs*) Very well, mamma! I'll not forget!

NINA. (*Startled but concealing her fear of having been discovered by a very professional manner*) Yes, they are pretty, aren't they? Miss Rawson picked them herself this morning, and she has such elegant taste in flowers.

ADELAIDE. (*Entering. Sweetly*) Nina, has the post come?

NINA. No madam, not yet! (*ANTHONY has turned in some confusion. NINA goes Right*)

ADELAIDE. (*To NINA*) Oh, thank you—(*Exit NINA*) I do not wonder you stop to admire the gladiolus, Anthony. (*She is all smiles and unsuspecting*) And Nina does so well with them!

ANTHONY. Doesn't she! But I came to see if you were not ready to join us outside.

ADELAIDE. With pleasure!—after I have skimmed the London cables. Home politics are in such a

mess. The poor dear Lords seem to be hanging by a hair!

ANTHONY. (*Escaping*) Well, don't let their tribulations keep you indoors too long. (*Exit*)

(*As ANTHONY disappears from view, ADELAIDE strides peremptorily to door Right, and calls in a low crisp metallic voice:*)

ADELAIDE. Nina!

NINA. (*Re-entering nervously*) Yes, madam!

ADELAIDE. (*Incisively*) Don't lie—it's no use! He kissed you.

NINA. (*Confounded*) Oh—ma'am!

ADELAIDE. How often has he done it?

NINA. Oh—ma'am!

ADELAIDE. That's all—thank you so much—(*Turning away and sitting, as if intent on a newspaper*)

NINA. (*Blubbling*) Oh, ma'am! (*And that is all she can say*)

ADELAIDE. (*Indulgently—after a long pause*) Why should I wish you to be discharged? You've done nothing wrong, at least, not that I know of.

NINA. (*Vehemently*) Oh, no, ma'am!

ADELAIDE. And if a fascinating gentleman insists upon kissing a pretty little housemaid now and then, I don't know how she's to help herself, do you?

NINA. Indeed, madam, it would be very hard to say. (*A long pause*)

ADELAIDE. (*Finding banknote in her bag*) Now, there's something for telling the truth. No one who tells the truth need be afraid of me. (*Pause while she seems to read paper*) After this, I may count upon you to run straight to me with any little thing you believe I ought to know. (*Pause*) Perhaps there is some little thing I ought to know now?

NINA. (*With hesitating eagerness*) Oh, ma'am,

I think—perhaps you ought to know about a little thing that happened here a few minutes ago.

ADELAIDE. (*Kindly*) That is for you to decide, Nina. Nothing could be further from me than a desire to pry into matters that do not concern me.

NINA. In a way, ma'am, it does concern you.

ADELAIDE. (*Definitely*) Then it's quite right I should know all about it!

NINA. (*Looking about shyly*) Mr. Leavitt was here, ma'am—

ADELAIDE. (*Encouragingly*) Yes?

NINA. —to tell Mr. Anthony about a man he had visiting him—a Mr. Swallow.

ADELAIDE. (*Concealing her consternation by a terrible fit of coughing*) Swallow? Swallow!! Dear me, what an odd name!—But how could that possibly concern me, Nina?

NINA. (*Confidentially*) There! I was sure it couldn't. And so was Mr. Anthony! At least, first he was; and then he wasn't; and then he was again; and anyway so as to make sure he told Mr. Leavitt to bring Mr. Swallow to luncheon to-day.

ADELAIDE. (*After another fit of coughing, perfectly self-possessed, very gracious*) Oh, yes, I see! How very thoughtful of him!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Entering by stairs*) Adelaide, hasn't the mail come yet?

ADELAIDE. The post, mamma? No, not yet.

MRS. DE SALLE. Oh, I do hope there's word from Marie about my hats. (*Going Right, she espies VIOLET who has just entered on porch and goes out to her*)

ADELAIDE. (*With a dismissing gesture to NINA*) You have shown a very commendable spirit, my good girl—

NINA. (*Going, confused with pleasure*) Oh, I'm sure madam, it's a very great privilege. (*Exits Left*)

ADELAIDE. (*Going resolutely toward porch with her Yankee-est manner*) Ma!—Violet!—Come in!

VIOLET. Why, what is it?

(*They come down anxious, apprehensive.*)

ADELAIDE. You'll find out soon enough. There's a great big double-barrelled shock coming. Are you ready?

MRS. DE SALLE. Oh, Della, don't frighten me so!

ADELAIDE. Sit down!—Violet! you sit there! (*There is a long pregnant pause. MRS. DE SALLE almost crouches with fear. ADELAIDE's eyes glitter. She crosses her arms like a general and gazes directly out toward the audience unafraid, resolute, and announces:*) Pete Swallow is comin' here to lunch!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Gulping with terror*) Pete! Oh, my God!

ADELAIDE. Get a grip on yourself, ma, and listen! Pete's over to the Leavitts' for some reason or other, and he's told Leavitt about Missionary Loop; and Anthony has invited him over here to put his story to the proof.

MRS. DE SALLE. Della, we're lost.

ADELAIDE. That's what I thought for one second, but now, well, I've changed my mind.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Helpless, overwhelmed, in mortal dread*) Oh, I want 'er know. I want 'er know.

ADELAIDE. (*Thinking with the speed and clear-sightedness of Napoleon*) You're hopeless, of course. He'd recognize you; you'd lose your head; you'd begin to talk!—you've got to be sick and go to bed in a dark room!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Taught to submit without protest*) Oh, all right! All right!—But how about you! You was engaged to Pete!

ADELAIDE. (*With smiling, metallic self-assurance*) Yes. Ten years ago! Do you think I haven't changed since then? Do you think I'd be mistaken easily for Della Sayles of Missionary Loop, Indiana? Watch me! if I can't knock him galley-west with my lorgnette and my English fiddle-de-dee, I miss my guess!

MRS. DE SALLE. Oh, Della, what courage!

ADELAIDE. I admit it will take some nerve, when I think of the hundreds of times I've sat in his lap. But you wait!—Violet is going to back me up. She's safe!—she was only a kid then—freckles, pig-tails and the rest. With her to help me, I'll take on the contract.

VIOLET. (*Quietly*) Della, I want to tell the truth.

ADELAIDE. (*With a sign of irritation*) Still twanging on that string! I thought you'd got the tune played out of you!

VIOLET. It's no use! I can't go on with Anthony any further—my mind's made up.

ADELAIDE. Well, unmake it! You're engaged to Anthony; and you're going to marry Anthony!

VIOLET. (*Quietly decisive*) I won't!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*With mountainous dignity*) Violet!! Are you my daughter?

VIOLET. (*Quivering with defiance*) But I tell you I won't!

MRS. DE SALLE. You'll do just as you're told! I'll have no disobedience! If you go back on us now, you'll be doing a wicked, shameful thing! Do you want to bring disgrace down on your own mother, and on your sister?

VIOLET. (*Desperately*) No, no, I don't! But the truth is more important than our reputation. I can't live this way any longer—I'm stifling!

ADELAIDE. (*Dryly*) Well, stifle! Stifle! 'Twon't kill ye! And when you're married, you can tell 'em all you like, for all me; but married you

shall be! This thing has gone too far to be skwiggled out of now.

MRS. DE SALLE. Della's right!

VIOLET. (*Helplessly*) Mother!

MRS. DE SALLE. Yes, *mother!* I'm your mother and I've got a right to boss you!

VIOLET. (*Defiantly*) You haven't a right to sell my soul!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Swelling up like a turkey*) I forbid you to use such language to me!

VIOLET. Oh, then I'm all alone! (*Collapsing*)

MRS. DE SALLE. (*With vast eloquence*) A thousand times worse than alone, if you stand out against those who know what's for your best good. And I tell you that——

ADELAIDE. (*Cutting her off with decision*) Oh, dry up, ma! I'm trying to think!

VIOLET. (*Frightened*) What are you doing?

ADELAIDE. Writing.

VIOLET. Adelaide! What is it?

ADELAIDE. A telegram.

VIOLET. Who to? What about?

ADELAIDE. (*Matter-of-fact*) I'm asking the Evening Chronicle to send me over the best man they've got on Long Island. I've a nice little story for them—a love story!

VIOLET. (*With a cry*) You shan't! (*Trying to seize paper*)

ADELAIDE. Sit down!

MRS. DE SALLE. Ollie! Sit down! *Do you hear me?*

ADELAIDE. (*Scrutinizing message*) Yes, I'm going to have the engagement announced in the Chronicle. (*Presses bell for servant*) It will make good copy. When the reporter comes, I can even suggest headlines. (*And she seems to be reading them from an imaginary newspaper*) "English Heiress, to Wed Great-Grandson of General

Anthony Rawson!"—(*To KITSON who enters Left*)
Kitson, have this wire sent at once!

KITSON. Yes, Madam! (*Exit Right*)

VIOLET. (*Starting up desperately*) No!

ADELAIDE. (*Checking her with authority*) Now, Violet, you are going to do the right thing.—Violet always comes around in a crisis; only she's a proud little mustang and fights it out at every step. That's all right, I don't blame her for it. See, Violet, dear,—run along upstairs and tell Briggs to lay out my afternoon gown. There's a dear!—(*Turns to her mother as VIOLET exits*) Now, listen ma! (*With her handkerchief she deftly removes the bloom from MRS. DE SALLE'S cheeks*) You're to go and find Miss Rawson and tell her that you've had one of your sudden attacks of vertigo, and that you fear you must retire for the rest of the day. Do it nicely now. Then come upstairs and give Briggs a hand with my dressing!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Faintly rebellious*) Dell, you make me look a puffect fright!

ADELAIDE. So much the better! She'll believe you! (*MRS. DE SALLE gets to her feet obediently*) Totter a bit, can't you? Put your hand so!—(*Demonstrating*) Don't act so blamed healthy, Ma!—Now, what is it you're going to say? You haven't the least idea, have you! (*Encouragingly, to her*) "My dear Miss Rawson, I'm so sorry"——

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Repeating parrot-like*) My dear Miss Rawson, I'm so sorry, but—(*Again at a loss*)

ADELAIDE. (*Encouragingly*) "But I've just had"——

MRS. DE SALLE. But I've just had one of my terrible——

ADELAIDE. Oh, don't be middle class! "But I've just had one of my queer little attacks—vertigo, you know—and I fear"——

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Taking the cue from her and performing in her best high society manner*)—One of my queer little attacks, vertigo, you know—and I fear—(*And now she finishes triumphantly*) I must retire for the rest of the day!

ADELAIDE. You look as if you was glad o' the chance,—but no matter!—There! Now, trot along!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Turning before exit*) I don't see why it need to be for all day. Couldn't it pass off after a while?

ADELAIDE. Yes, of course—tell her that. Tell her you never know, but sometimes they do pass off; and when the creature goes, I'll get word to you and have you let out! That is—if we win!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Hands desperately clasped*) God help us! (*Exits*)

ADELAIDE. (*Collecting her various belongings, with a hard undaunted smile*) “God help us!” indeed! (*Breaks into buoyant laughter*) Well, why not? We help ourselves! (*Is going by stairs*)

Curtain

ACT II

SCENE: *Same as Act I. One hour later.*

MISS RAWSON *is standing just outside porch door, scrutinizing the luncheon table, which is supposed to stand on porch off Right, and speaking to KITSON, who is invisible.*

MISS RAWSON. Yes, Kitson, that will do very well.

KITSON. (*Appearing*) Thank you, madam.

MISS RAWSON. There will be only eight of us after all.

KITSON. Only eight, madam?

MISS RAWSON. Mrs. de Salle will not be down.

KITSON. Very good, madam.

MISS RAWSON. (*To herself, with sympathetic recollection*) Dear me, how very ill she seemed! (*Sits with impatient air*) You spoke to Mr. Geoffrey?

KITSON. Yes, madam, I told him you desired to see him.

GEOFFREY. (*Entering from porch, briskly*) You wanted me, Aunt Abigail?

MISS RAWSON. Yes! Decidedly! I hear that you are not expecting to favor us with your presence at lunch!

GEOFFREY. (*At a loss for an explanation*) I—why—(*Kicking the rug with his toe*) What's the use? You know that's not my style of thing.

MISS RAWSON. (*With severity*) Don't urge that as an excuse. It's high time you adopted the style. Your absence would be a slight to the Leavitts as well as to Anthony and the de Salles.

GEOFFREY. (*With boyish awkwardness*) You know what a mess I make of everything, Aunt Abigail! We don't go in much for piddy-widdy in New Mexico.

MISS RAWSON. We will put all that aside. (*Rising*) I insist that you be present whether you like it or not! All the more because of your ill-timed outbreak this morning. (*Scrutinizing him with disapproval*) Make yourself presentable! (*With a gesture she refuses to listen to him*) And do not oblige me to send for you when the time comes. (*Exit with stateliness into study*)

(*As GEOFFREY starts to leave the room VIOLET enters from stairs.*)

VIOLET. (*Quivering with anxiety*) Geoffrey! Geoffrey! Can I speak to you?

GEOFFREY. (*Startled*) Why, of course!

VIOLET. (*Hurrying to him*) I've something—terribly important—to ask you!

GEOFFREY. Me!

VIOLET. Yes. There isn't anybody else.

GEOFFREY. (*Fraternally*) Why, Violet, what is it?

VIOLET. I—I—(*Losing her courage*) Oh, I don't know that I'd better, after all.

GEOFFREY. (*Encouragingly*) Are you afraid of me?

VIOLET. (*Shyly*) Well—listen! (*And she takes the plunge excitedly*) Suppose a girl had been telling lies to everybody all her life, without really knowing how mean and wrong it was, and suppose finally some—er—something made her see it all in a different way. Don't you think—(*With an incoherent outburst*) Oh, Geoffrey,—sometimes it's just awfully hard to know what's right, isn't it? I don't know what to do, because it isn't just myself, you see. And oh, if I do what I think I ought to, it'll make everybody so unhappy! (*Pathetic in her helplessness*)

GEOFFREY. (*Earnestly*) But you really think you ought to do it?

VIOLET. (*Gaining confidence*) I do! I really do! Yes, my mind's made up. I'm going to tell the truth, even if I have to hate myself forever and ever. It'll be better than this, anyway. Oh, please tell me I have the courage!

GEOFFREY. (*Taking her hands firmly*) If it's something you really ought to do, I *know* you have the courage!

VIOLET. (*Impulsively*) Oh, Geoffrey! (*Releasing her hands and running to stairs*) Perhaps, when I've done this thing, you'll never speak to me again.

GEOFFREY. Can't I help you, Violet?

VIOLET. (*From the stairs*) You have helped me! When the time comes, I know I can do it.

(*Exits, GEOFFREY looks after her an instant with frank adoration, then turns as ANTHONY enters from porch.*)

ANTHONY. (*With an innuendo*) Oh, you're here! I was looking for you.

GEOFFREY. (*Matter-of-fact*) Well, that's unusual business.

ANTHONY. Failing to find you at the pig-pen, I tried several less likely spots:—the kennels, the cabbage patch, and so on,—this last of all.

GEOFFREY. Well, what can I do for you?

ANTHONY. (*With irritation*) You can listen to me for about one minute. You're paying decidedly too much attention to Violet, and I don't like it. She may, for all I know; but that's not the point.

GEOFFREY. (*Quietly*) The point is——?

ANTHONY. (*Brutally direct*) The point is: she's engaged to me! The point is:—hands off!

GEOFFREY. (*With self-control*) What do you imply by that?

ANTHONY. (*Cuttingly*) Do you wish me to specify?

GEOFFREY. (*Facing him directly*) Yes, specify!

ANTHONY. (*With a look at the stairs*) I'll specify some other time. It's enough just now for you to understand me!

GEOFFREY. Understand you!

ANTHONY. Yes, I say: understand me! (*Very clearly and biting, to GEOFFREY who is now at the door*) Do you—understand me?

GEOFFREY. (*Giving him a look of unspeakable contempt*) Oh, yes—yes—I understand you! (*Exit to study*)

(ANTHONY is unpleasantly startled; but recovers himself, with a shrug of cynical amusement, and after an instant's delay, touches bell for servant.)

NINA. (*Entering promptly*) Oh, you rang, Mr. Anthony?

ANTHONY. (*With a cautioning gesture*) Come here! (*NINA comes, a little backwardly*) Don't be afraid. I'm not going to eat you.

NINA. I know—but——

ANTHONY. (*Reassuringly*) That's all right. One scare a day is enough for my nerves, too. (*Coming closer, in lower voice*) Tell me, did Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh suspect anything?

NINA. (*Outrageously reassuring*) Oh, no, Mr. Anthony, not a thing!

ANTHONY. (*A little insistent, a little wheedling*) Not a thing? Are you sure?

NINA. (*Eyes innocently wide*) Oh, sure!

(*Enter KITSON from Right, crosses Left, with a tray. He passes the two without seeming to observe.*)

ANTHONY. Didn't she speak to you?

NINA. Yes, Mr. Anthony, but not about that.

ANTHONY. Good! (*Coming closer*) Nina, you're a very clever little girl, and—(*At this moment he becomes aware of KITSON's presence and immediately alters his tone and manner to one of severest censure*)—and I hope that I shall not have to speak to you again about it. I do not want any such thing to happen again! (*By this time KITSON has gone out, Left, and ANTHONY now tweaks her ear laughingly*) You little imp, you, what makes you so irresistible, anyway!

NINA. (*Archly*) Oh, I'm sure, Mr. Anthony!

ANTHONY. Listen, don't you think we might manage to be even better friends? (*He is tempted to kiss her, but an impulse of caution holds him*) We must find a place some time where there's not so much coming and going—eh? (*Chucks her chin and exits*)

(*NINA has just turned to go when KITSON re-enters Left with silver coffee service.*)

KITSON. (*Not putting down his burden*) Well, I see you're at it again!

NINA. (*With an indifferent shrug*) Humph!

KITSON. (*Sagaciously*) Smear yourself with honey; you'll hear the flies buzz.

NINA. (*Attempting vainly to pass him*) Oh!—what talk!

KITSON. You're a proud little baggage, ain't ye! You're a-going to have your fun, ain't ye! It wouldn't mean nothing to you, I suppose, would it, if I was to tell you—(*Halting himself, with a significant shake of the head*)—what I could tell you, an' I would, about Mr. Anthony!

NINA. What could you tell me: I got to know that first.

KITSON. Tell ye? Hst! (*Very darkly*) Did you ever hear about poor Mamie Tanner?

NINA. (*Imitating his tone*) No, I never heard about poor Mamie Tanner. What about her?

KITSON. (*With melodramatic impressiveness*) What about her?—Well, that's something I don't intend to tell to a living soul, young lady, so long as I'm in Mr. Rawson's service. Go down on your two knees to me if you like. My lips are sealed. You'll get nothing.

NINA. Pooh! I can't see why you should be so terrible close about it.

KITSON. Ye can't, eh?

NINA. (*Her curiosity at last aroused*) Go on! Tell!

KITSON. (*Drawing himself up*) There is such a thing as family, young lady; though you may not happen to have heard of it. I've been five and twenty years in the service of Mr. Rawson. (*And he looks it*)

NINA. Do you mean to tell me even Mr. Rawson don't know?

KITSON. (*Sepulchrally*) If Mr. Rawson was once to find out—Oh!—Oh! But as I've many a time said to myself:—Kitson, your lips are sealed!—Let 'em bring on their king's horses. Let 'em bring on their king's men. They'll not pry a word out o' me.

NINA. (*Taking a new tack*) Oh, pshaw! You're just putting on airs to scare me.

KITSON. (*Superior to all temptation*) Very well. Very well. Have it just as you like. But you can't say I haven't done my duty by you. Now go and fix up the sandwiches!—And, remember, you're warned. (*Exits to porch*)

(NINA goes out Left, with a piqued expression as MISS RAWSON is seen on the porch. She stops a moment to scrutinize the luncheon table.)

MISS RAWSON. Yes, that is very good.—Have Nina put some flowers there—(*Indicating*)—a vase of cosmos, I should think—or single asters.

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Who is seen to join her outside on the porch and now enters the room in her company*) My dear Miss Rawson, really! I don't know what to say! It's simply outrageous that Stephen should have insisted on bringing him over—I did my best——

(A group consisting of LEAVITT, ANTHONY and SWALLOW now appears on the porch. PETER

SWALLOW, *the central figure, conspicuous for the pseudo-Broadway cut of his clothes, faces towards the view, and to judge by his oratorical gestures is ceaselessly talking.*)

MISS RAWSON. (*Consolingly to MRS. LEAVITT*) There, there! Not another word, my dear! Anthony has explained everything. He was sure we would find him entertaining.

MRS. LEAVITT. At all events, the agony will soon be over. He takes the one-seventeen.

MISS RAWSON. But I ordered lunch for one o'clock.

MRS. LEAVITT. Good! Don't sit down till he's gone.

(KITSON *is taking SWALLOW's hat and stick.*)

JUSTIN. (*Entering from study*) Mrs. Leavitt! How do you do! (*Shaking hands*) This time you are going to see our English Violet.

MRS. LEAVITT. I can hardly wait. Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh has simply taken me by storm. Oh, how happy you all must be.

JUSTIN. We are!

MISS RAWSON. Our guests have arrived, you see, Justin. (*Indicating the porch*)

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Pointing to SWALLOW with comic desperation*) That centerpiece—that monument-like affair—that's—that's—Oh, Miss Rawson, do take me somewhere!

(MISS RAWSON *laughingly takes her under her wing and the two are about to exit, Right, when SWALLOW turning, perceives MISS RAWSON, and intercepts with exuberant cordiality. PETER SWALLOW is a joint product of the unsophisticated Middle West and sophisticated East.*

The heartiness and simplicity of his behavior combine strangely with his egregious self-esteem and his uncontrollable pleasure in hearing himself talk. He thinks his clothes quite the last word in the matter of style,—and so indeed they are.)

SWALLOW. (*Beaming upon MISS RAWSON*) And this, if I be not mistaken, is the old Auntie! Your years rest lightly upon you, madam—as lightly as the snow upon a new-made grave!

MISS RAWSON. You flatter me!—Come, Lottie! (*The ladies escape*)

SWALLOW. (*Standing in the doorway, incapable of checking the flow of his own words*) Nice old lady!—As I was sayin', gentlemen, a callin' like mine gives a man a very pretty eye for landscapey effects. Take a nice artistic tombstun now—say one of these monuments o' the Cleopatry's Needle type:—she got to be placed in a certain particular way to give the very handsomest impression. You can't set 'er in a hole in the ground, it's like she was a-hollerin' out for some commandin' eminence—(*Pauses and wheels round toward ocean view, while his hand seems to be picking out a suitable site*)

LEAVITT. (*Ready to introduce him*) Excuse me, Mr. Swallow, but I should like——

SWALLOW. (*Utterly ignoring the other's effort*) There! Say like that 'ere sandhill, over yonder,—supposin' all this country to be one mighty cemetery, with the eternal sea, Old Ocean, with his thunders, beyond!—that's the site for your needle!—An' put some simple, elegant mottah on her base, like *hope*, in 9-inch, high-relief letterin'.—You catch the eye at once; and similarly you create a dignified, noble and solemn effect,—in short, a 9-inch effect!

LEAVITT. (*More insistently*) Mr. Swallow, I want to make you——

SWALLOW. (*Quite oblivious*) Or take the two words, *I sleep*—that's an especially chaste, very modern sentiment that's goin' the rounds in certain sections where we do business. But, on the other hand——

LEAVITT. (*Desperately*) Excuse me, Mr. Swallow, but I want you to meet Mr. Rawson.

JUSTIN. (*Shaking hands with SWALLOW*) How do you do, sir!

SWALLOW. (*Setting by his cigar, with a lingering look of regret and fully entering the apartment*) It's a privilege, sir, to shake hands with so notorious and honorable a bulwark of American finance! Your name, sir, is a synonym for a sound and conservative commercial policy, not only in Hoboken, where we have the honor of doing the largest monument business in the State of New Jersey, but equally throughout the length and breadth of my own native state of Indiana, the population-center of this great land of ours. To be known and favorably known, in Indiana, is therefore equivalent to being known *everywhere!*——

JUSTIN. Indeed!

ANTHONY. (*With amusement*) There's logic for you!

SWALLOW. "Hark to the voice of Indiana," whisper the Sister States. "It is the voice of the people; and the voice of the people—Vox populi, Vox Dei—is the voice of God."

JUSTIN. (*With veiled irony*) You overwhelm me, sir!

SWALLOW. Thank you; thank you, sir. You honor me too much in saying so. Yet yours, Sir, is in all truth an enviable lot. Fame, wealth, position, honors—all are yours! From a pinnacle of self-satisfied serenity you may look down upon the puny struggles of your fellow men. This beautiful and luxurious villa, sir, is in itself, an emblem and

monument to your success. This handsome young financier, your son, is, as I well see, the pride and joy of his father's heart.

ANTHONY. (*To LEAVITT*) There you have me.

SWALLOW. Nor need I ask whether the stalwart fellow I met yonder on the garden walk is also a scion of the House of Rawson:—No! for I saw the father in the son's eyes!

ANTHONY. (*To LEAVITT*) Good for Geoffrey!

SWALLOW. Congratulations, sir, upon the two of them:—a brace of Romans! (*Again shakes hands vehemently*)

JUSTIN. Thank you.

SWALLOW. (*To ANTHONY*) I make bold to postulate that your brother is your companion and rival in mounting the high ladder of plutocratic attainment.

ANTHONY. Geoffrey's interests are along quite different lines. Lately he has taken up farming.

SWALLOW. (*Delighted to find a new theme for his eloquence*) A farmer! Well, God prosper the farmer, say I, and say it with all my heart and soul. Why, Agriculture, sir, is the very bone and sinew of this great Commonwealth of ours. "Stay by the farm, young man" is my counsel to the restless, city-bedazzled youth of to-day. I have lived the life of cities; I have known it to the innermost, worm-infested core——

ANTHONY. How interesting!

SWALLOW. And it ain't what it's cracked up to be, my young friend; no sir, not by a long sight! Temptations spawn and fester in them busy marts of traffic:——

ANTHONY. Quite true.

SWALLOW. Vice stalks abroad, attired in the spangled witcheries of Delilah.——

ANTHONY. Yes, yes.

SWALLOW. (*Infatuated with his own volubility*)

But in the country, far from the maddening crowd—ah, there one may breathe God's own pure air, drink water, *water*, from the old oaken bucket that hangs in the well, and, in short, live as they was intended to live, by an all-wise, all-powerful Creator! (*Stops, quite out of breath*)

JUSTIN. I am surprised, sir, you did not take up oratory as a vocation.

SWALLOW. Oratory! Ha! say, we're all like that in Indiana. We imbibe it with our mother's milk. The state resounds and echoes with it from boreal north to sunny south; and from Orient east to sunset west. It was this little oratorical gift of mine—my silver tongue, as friends are wont to speak of it—that first pointed the way to my success in the tombstone business.

JUSTIN. Indeed!

SWALLOW. My Indiana birthright it is that's landed me where I am; and I'm grateful, and deeply grateful, to the Mother State that brought me forth.

JUSTIN. You ought to be.

SWALLOW. (*Remembering his errand*) But say—where are the petticoats?

ANTHONY. (*Coolly*) Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh and Miss de Salle will be down directly. (*Turns to LEAVITT*)

SWALLOW. (*To JUSTIN*) And the old girl?

JUSTIN. (*Chillingly*) Mrs. de Salle is ill. I fear you will not have the chance to see *her*.

SWALLOW. (*To JUSTIN*) Look a-here. She didn't know I was a-comin', did she?

JUSTIN. By some oversight, I neglected to inform her.

SWALLOW. That's very cleverly said, sir; but I mean it quite contrariwise, and no offense taken or given. (*With a manifest wink at ANTHONY*)

ANTHONY. (*Not returning the wink*) Mr. Swallow tells me he has the greatest curiosity to

meet Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, never having talked to a lady bearing a hyphenated name.

SWALLOW. True it is, though I might add that I recently had the privilege of fillin' a order for a hyphenated tombstun,—four names, in all—thirty-six letters, includin' the hyphen, which counts exactly like a letter; and all to go on one line.

ANTHONY. One line! (*Amused*)

LEAVITT. Quite a problem!

SWALLOW. Not for me! I recommended one o' these here broad stuns—broad and low.

ANTHONY. Oh, yes!

SWALLOW. A block o' pink Rhode Island granite, polished so you could count your teeth in it, and on top, a sort of sofa-pilluh in white marble, with a very chaste fringe and tassuls at the corners. The whole effect was stylish, and up-to-date,——

ANTHONY. It sounds so!

SWALLOW. And the name, "Gwendolyn Frederika Threadingwell, hyphen, Smith" showed up most handsome, hardly seemin' to require the customary "In Memory of" above it.

JUSTIN. I can easily understand that.

SWALLOW. I may declare without boastin' that our company pays more attention to the artistic features of its mortuary memorials than any other throughout the length and breadth of this country; and in case any of you in this house should ever be under the sad necessity—as Mr. Leavitt here is at the present moment—of considerin' a suitable monument, even so modest a monument as a slab of granite so gray—as the hymn well says, gray being the cheapest variety—I take pleasure in leavin' a few o' my professional cards. (*Is about to hand one to LEAVITT but recollects himself*) Oh, you've got one! (*Passes cards to ANTHONY and JUSTIN*) All inquiries receive the promptest attention. Our representatives are pleased to make calls even when

there is no immediate prospect of doin' any business—just to size up the field, as you might say.

JUSTIN. That's certainly enterprise.

SWALLOW. Enterprise! Well, that's what you need in the monument business. You never know when a good thing may drop your way. (*Suddenly recalling his errand*) But, say Leavitt—what time does my train go? (*Consulting watch*)

LEAVITT. One-seventeen, Mr. Swallow.

SWALLOW. Ahem! Say it don't look like I was goin' to have time to eat with the folks, does it?

JUSTIN. But I think there's a dining car on the train, Mr. Swallow.

SWALLOW. Diner? Cough up a dollar for fancy victuals that ain't worth thirty cents? Not for Swallow!

JUSTIN. (*Curtly*) I will have Kitson bring you a bite.

SWALLOW. (*Beaming*) That will suit me to a T, thank you very kindly—if it wouldn't be much bother.

JUSTIN. (*Impatiently*) Oh, no, no! Not at all. (*Exits to porch*)

SWALLOW. (*Perfectly at ease as he seats himself with crossed legs and relights his cigar*) Talk about your Easterners bein' stiff! I never could see it. Wherever I go throughout the length and breadth of this great country of ours, I find a handshake and an open heart. I say, look for what you expect and that's what you'll see. You kow-tow to people and naturally they play the top-lofty. Treat 'em like they was equals and old friends, and old friends they be thence and forever. (*To ANTHONY*) Say can't you hurry up your bunch of English swells? I came here to look 'em over, and I don't intend to get left.

ANTHONY. Don't worry. There's plenty of time yet.

SWALLOW. (*With patronizing heartiness*) So you reckoned you was going to marry a *dee* Salle, did you, young man? (*And he laughs at the comedy of it*)

ANTHONY. (*Cautioningly*) Don't speak so loud!

SWALLOW. (*Naïve as a schoolboy*) Why, ain't the rest going to get let in on the joke?

ANTHONY. Not until I know for certain there is a joke. I must see with my own eyes.

SWALLOW. You'll see fast enough! Just wait till she finds out who's here. If I can't knock her galley-west with one crook of my little finger, my name ain't Pete Swallow.

ANTHONY. You certainly show no lack of confidence.

SWALLOW. Why should I? I'd like to know. You've heard the whole story, yourself—don't it fit? Ain't it a perfect dove-tail? Don't it make her out to be the prettiest, smartest bunch of lies that ever come down the pike?—Oh, and it ain't as if she wasn't capable of it, neither, no, sir!—the little monkey—the pert little monkey! (*Becomes lost in reminiscent dreams*)

ANTHONY. You haven't told us how this Della Sayles looked.

SWALLOW. (*As in a trance of memory*) Ain't I? Fourteen hands high she was—just up to my shoulder. Neat, trim, handsome, with the smartest little foot and ankle a girl ever showed; and a waist,—well, sir it was a waist; and when I say a waist, well—there's nothing more to be said. "Della, you little puss," I used often to say to her, as she was a-settin' here, (*Indicating his lap*) of a late evenin' in front o' the old base-burner,— "Della, you little puss, where'd you ever get a waist like that? Your ma ain't got one. Your Dad's a regular rhinoceros. But *you*—well, the wasp and the butterfly are your only rivals in the waist line, my

dear." And she'd laught, and laugh, and like as not box my ears in play, and so it would go, night after night!—Oh happy days! Happy days! (*Dreams with pensive smile*)

ANTHONY. But her features, you haven't spoken of them. What were they like?

SWALLOW. (*Still in his trance*) A flower garden, sir, a flower garden. The rose vying with the lily— and her eyes—blue as forget-me-nots.

ANTHONY. (*Half to himself*) Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh has blue eyes.

SWALLOW. Forget-me-nots! (*Roused from trance*) *Forget-me-nots!* Well, by gosh, she went and forgot *me* quick enough! She gave me the go-by, and gave it good and hard. At first I was deeply embittered; life was a howling wilderness of despair. Oh, but one gets over them things.—For a few weeks, young man, *your* loss will seem a big thing to you, very like; but then you'll begin to look about you again, and remember there's other fish in the sea. It's that thought lightens the tragedy.

ANTHONY. It's not my case we're discussing, if you please.

SWALLOW. Ahem! A little wee bit sensitive, ain't ye! Well, I don't blame ye, young feller. I was myself. I'd wince. I'd chew my lip. I'd flare up against my best friend! Oh, but if I hadn't been love-blind, I might have known all along what was booked to happen. She was an odd kid—Della Sayles—restless, finicky, with more ideers in her head than does a woman any good. And, for stage-acting—well, I never seen Burnhart, but once out in Indianapolis I ran up against that Guinea headliner, Dooze—Elinora Dooze: you heard of her, of course? She was playing Adrienne Vancouver the night I saw her. Pooh! Pooh! You call that acting? Why, my little Della could put the kibosh all over her, and never let on she was acting

at all! That was just the trouble, ye never could tell! (*Enter KITSON with tray of eatables for SWALLOW*) Well, I reckon her game's called on her this time. It's her finish. (*As he now looks over the tray critically*) Thanks.—Say, waiter, ain't you got any English mustard in the house?

KITSON. Yes, sir.

SWALLOW. Well, bring me some mustard and a cup of coffee and some loaf sugar.

KITSON. (*Much insulted*) Anything else, sir?

SWALLOW. Well, throw in a couple of toothpicks, and I'll be fixed first rate. (*Exit KITSON*)

(*Enter ADELAIDE by stairs followed by VIOLET.*)

LEAVITT. Here are the ladies now.

ADELAIDE. Ah, Mr. Leavitt—this is delightful.

(*Never was MRS. BUMPSTEAD-LEIGH more unapproachably the lady of high degree, brilliant, sure of herself, dazzlingly alert and dominating; and of course she carries her lorgnette, embattled woman's unmatchable weapon.*)

SWALLOW. (*Jumping up with a bound*) Della Sayles!!

ADELAIDE. (*Examining this stranger with a certain air of startled offence*) I beg your pardon. (*Bewildered, to ANTHONY*) Why, Anthony dear—what is this? I had not been informed.

ANTHONY. (*Wincing in spite of himself, but then, with steady incisiveness*) Permit me, Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, to introduce Mr. Swallow—Mr. Peter Swallow, of Indiana.

ADELAIDE. (*Distantly*) Pleased, I'm sure. (*She turns to VIOLET as if considering the advisability of withdrawal*) Violet, dear, I fear we have come down too soon.

SWALLOW. Not at all, not at all, madam. I have only a few minutes to stay, and I was particularly anxious to get in a few words with you.

ADELAIDE. Words with *me*? (*And again she seems about to withdraw, much puzzled, you would say, and certainly somewhat offended*)

ANTHONY. (*Anxious to account acceptably for the intruding presence*) Mr. Swallow is ambitious to make the acquaintance of an English lady of your position, Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh. He will consider it a great favor on your part if you will consent to stay.

ADELAIDE. (*Still distantly*) I see. Oh, charmed, I'm sure. (*Turns ignoringly away, and joins LEAVITT on the other side of the room*)

ANTHONY. (*Continuing the introductions watchfully*) Miss de Salle; Mr. Swallow.

VIOLET. (*Cordially and with some manner*) I am so pleased to meet another of Mr. Rawson's friends. But where are the rest, Anthony?—Have they deserted you?

SWALLOW. No matter about the rest, Miss. It was you and your sister I wanted to see.—The rest can go ding!

VIOLET. (*Puzzled*) Dear, dear! Is that a compliment, Mr. Swallow?

SWALLOW. Take it whatever way you like, young lady. I know what I mean by it, and that's enough for now.

VIOLET. Oh, dear. You've aroused my curiosity. I must tell Adelaide about it! (*Joins LEAVITT and ADELAIDE and converses*)

(SWALLOW *returning to his meal, speaks apart to*
ANTHONY.)

SWALLOW. (*Profoundly intrigued*) Well, I take the count!

ANTHONY. (*Rather brusquely*) You went wide of the mark. That's clear!

SWALLOW. (*Stoutly*) The young one stumps me. The other—well, she looks like Della Sayles, and she don't look like Della Sayles. Darn'd if I know which way she looks most.—But I ain't done yet, no, sir! (*Takes his plate to sofa, Right, and begins to eat with enjoyment*)

ADELAIDE. (*To LEAVITT*) Pray don't apologize my dear Mr. Leavitt. I wish to be familiar with every phase of your complex social problems over here. (*And they stroll up to the piano and continue a vivid conversation*)

VIOLET. (*Sitting on the sofa beside MR. SWALLOW, ingratiatingly*) I'm going to sit down by you, Mr. Swallow. I know we two will get along famously together.

SWALLOW. (*In midst of mouthful*) I usually manage to get along with the young ones.

VIOLET. I shudder to think how many hearts you have captured.

SWALLOW. (*Immensely flattered, shaking his fork at her*) Now—now!

ANTHONY. (*To VIOLET with irony*) You will find Mr. Swallow a brilliant conversationalist.

SWALLOW. (*Pleased*) I don't know as I can do myself justice, while I'm takin' in food; but I'll try to live up to my reputation.—Say where's that waiter with the mustard?

VIOLET. It's really too bad, Mr. Swallow, you can't stay to lunch. You would love it! And then, too, we shall have seen so very little of each other before you must go!

SWALLOW. Quite true, quite true, young lady. But it's the same way all through this life of ours. We go and come like autumn leaves before the blast; here to-day, to-morrow whither? Perhaps—as my

callin' so frequently reminds me—perhaps under the sod.

VIOLET. (*Naïvely*) Ah, what a beautiful sentiment! You must repeat it for my sister.—Adelaide, I have asked Mr. Swallow to repeat an exquisite thought he has just expressed.

ADELAIDE. (*Raising her lorgnette*) Mr. Swallow? Oh yes,—pray let us hear it.

SWALLOW. (*Handing his plate to VIOLET*) Hold this, little one! I was simply remarkin'—(*Rises and approaches ADELAIDE*) Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, upon the transitory nature of all life; and I said it might be compared to autumn leaves, which go and come, whence nor whither who can say?

ADELAIDE. (*With a humorously rapt look*) Who indeed! (*Graciously condescending*) Charming—charming—and so very original. Might I inquire, do you write poetry?

SWALLOW. (*Sitting*) I am said to be pretty slick at turning an epitaph, but along other lines I have deserted the Muse since the age of twenty-five years.—Yet, now that we are speakin' of Po'try, Madam, my thoughts are carried backward to those more youthful days and to faces that were nigh in the long ago; and I am strangely reminded by your countenance of one who was very dear to me when I was still, as the poet Gray has it, a youth to fortune and to fame unknown.

ADELAIDE. (*Sympathetic,—with a wink of immense amusement at LEAVITT*) Fancy! I am sorry if I have awakened painful memories of one gone before!

SWALLOW. “Gone before!” That's just what she ain't—leastways not to my knowledge. The go-by is what she gave me. That was in Missionary Loop, Indiana, where I resided until my twenty-seventh year. Was you ever there, might I ask?

ADELAIDE. (*With a blank look*) Washington was our home, Mr. Sparrow—

SWALLOW. Swallow, if you please, ma'am.

ADELAIDE. (*Utterly ignoring the correction*) Washington was our home in the old days. I have traveled very little in this country; but my present visit teaches me how much I have missed by not knowing it better. Is this Missionary Loo an interesting town? I do not remember to have met the name in Baedeker.

VIOLET. (*With great interest*) I suppose Missionary Loo was one of your early settlers who carried the Gospel to the Indians!

SWALLOW. (*Rising*) Loop, Miss, Loop. Not Loo.

ADELAIDE. Loop, my dear, Loop.—Make a note of it!

SWALLOW. Sister's got it. The town is chiefly famous, ladies, because it was the home of old Jim Sayles, proprietor of Sayles's Sissapoola Indian Herb Remedies, which are known and used up and down the length and breadth of this country.—

ADELAIDE. Indian Herb Remedies! Fancy!

VIOLET. How very romantic!

SWALLOW. Well, I don't know what mottah is graved on Old Jim's headstone in Missionary Loop; but I can tell you what it ought to 'a been:—H—O—A—X.

ADELAIDE. (*In doubt*) H—O—A—X—hoax? Have I the word aright?—Oh! I begin to understand!—Violet, my dear, did you notice the very interesting Americanism Mr. Swallow has just given us—H—O—A—X—? I have heard of it before; a corruption I believe, of our English *Hocus Pocus*. So this Mr. Sayles of Missionary Loop made pretensions for his remedies which were not warranted by facts. Dear me! How very dreadful!

SWALLOW. Yes. Wasn't it! and here's another for you, madam. Old Jim had two daughters.

ADELAIDE. Two daughters! Fancy! And did they have Indian names also?

SWALLOW. Well, the name of the oldest, ma'am, was *Della*, and to *me* she plighted her troth.

ADELAIDE. (*Sympathetically*) Ah, and it is she, then, who is the painful memory, Mr. Shallow?

SWALLOW. (*Balked for a moment by her new mis-nomenclature but too resolute to be diverted from the scent*) Yes—and may I venture to ask you, madam, one question outright and flat-foot?

ADELAIDE. (*Immensely entertained*) Flat-foot?—Oh, why, certainly! *Flatfoot!*

SWALLOW. And you promise to answer it in the same way?

ADELAIDE. You mean flat-feet?

SWALLOW. I do.

ADELAIDE. (*Exchanging an amused look with LEAVITT*) Very well. I am at your disposition.

SWALLOW. (*With direct challenge*) What was your father's business?

ADELAIDE. (*Blankly*) Business—Business—Papa——?

SWALLOW. Why, didn't your Pa *have* a business, lady?

ADELAIDE. Why, no!—not in the legitimate, accepted sense of the word. Oh, it would be quite improper to refer to papa's activities as business,—I mean, of course, except in a very special understanding of the term.

SWALLOW. Well, what *was* he, then?

ADELAIDE. (*Filially tender*) Dear papa was a philanthropist.

SWALLOW. A what?

ADELAIDE. His life was dedicated to Humanity. His name is blessed to-day in a thousand homes. I find it hard to speak to a stranger of poor dear

papa: but you see you had my promise in advance.
(*And the subject is evidently closed henceforth*)

SWALLOW. (*Recovering himself with a great effort after this momentary knock-out*) We was speaking, you remember, about this here Sayles family; and I was about to remark that after the death of Old Jim, and the moving away of the family from Missionary Loop, it got noised about that they had changed their name to *de Salle* and was residing in the National Capital.

ADELAIDE. (*Incredulously*) In *Washington*?

SWALLOW. (*Doggedly*) The same, Madam.

ADELAIDE. Dear me! How very odd! If such were the case, I am at a loss to understand why we should never have known of it,—the name, as you see, being identical with ours. Violet, dear, did you ever hear of any other de Salles in Washington?

VIOLET. Never. But probably these people Mr. Swallow tells of had no social standing.

ADELAIDE. Oh, of course! I understand that perfectly. Yet I wonder the *letters* never went wrong.—Ah, but now a thought comes! Did not the family of whom you speak, Mr. Wallow, spell the prefix with the Capital D?

SWALLOW. (*Baffled*) I dunno anything about that.

ADELAIDE. (*Giving instruction with authority*) The name de Salle is spelled in a number of ways, though our branch of the family has invariably employed the small D—comme en français, n'est-ce pas?—le petit signe de la noblesse!—But I remember even to have seen it spelled, in an old volume of memoirs—(*And she seems to search her memory*) Annales d'une famille ancienne de la Nourmandie, par Geoffroi—yes, par Geoffroi!—as a single word thus—Capital D, E, small S, A, double L, E,—curious wasn't it!—in which case it would

afford an interesting analogy, would it not, with the Scotch MacDonald, which, as you of course know, is capable of at least three variants.

SWALLOW. (*Flabbergasted*) A three bagger!

ADELAIDE. (*To LEAVITT, immensely amused*) A what?—Oh, how delicious!

SWALLOW. (*Recovering again, and supplying by loudness what he has lost in confidence*) Well, as I said, the young lady to whom I was betrothed was named Della, and it seems to me that you are the *exact* and *identical* image of her!

ADELAIDE. (*Seeming slightly offended*) Indeed, sir!

VIOLET. (*Merrily*) I do believe Mr. Swallow is hinting, Adelaide, that you would be a welcome substitute!

ADELAIDE. (*Reprovingly*) Violet, dear, you know how I dislike to have a jest made of sacred subjects! I am sure Mr. Swallow could have no idea *whatever* of exceeding the bounds of the strictest propriety in my presence.

SWALLOW. (*With violent conviction*) Never again, Pete! Never again! (*Rising*)

ADELAIDE. (*As if startled*) Never again? What does he mean? Have I made some terrible *faux pas*? Have I been *gauche*?

SWALLOW. Oh, that's all right, madam. It ain't often that Pete Swallow puts his foot into the wrong puddle. I will say that for myself!

ADELAIDE. (*With concern to LEAVITT*) Oh, but I don't understand. The poor fellow seems quite disordered.

LEAVITT. No cause for concern, dear Lady! It's likely nothing but indigestion.

GEOFFREY. (*Entering hastily from porch*) Excuse me, Mr. Swallow, but it's getting very near your train time. You'll have to hurry!

LEAVITT. (*To ADELAIDE*) Pardon me! (*He*

starts quickly for the porch) I told my man to have the machine here in good season. Has he come yet?

GEOFFREY. Yes, he's at the gate.

(Exit LEAVITT as KITSON enters with SWALLOW's coat, etc.)

SWALLOW. Well, I reckon it's time I was a-hikin' anyhow.—There's no bokays comin' my way, I notice.

(KITSON helps him into automobile coat.)

VIOLET. *(Rising quickly and starting to leave the room; but she pauses for one eager tremulous word with GEOFFREY)* Nobody'll ever forgive me, but I'm going to do it! I'm going to do it! *(Exit, followed after an instant by GEOFFREY)*

ADELAIDE. But surely you are not going without a word of good-bye, Mr. Swallow?

SWALLOW. *(Coming to her for his valedictory)* One word, lady, and that's all. Time and tide wait for no man! and in the end Death cuts down all! The moral is: get busy! As a detective I may be a fizzle: but as a monumentalist, I'm right on the spot—with the goods! There's my card! One of these days you might be requiring a nice, up-to-date, artistic memorial. You can't tell! You English are pretty slow getting anywhere, but you do die! Look over our prices and you'll see why America heads the civilized world in the tombstone business. Put her there!—*(And he offers his hand heartily)*—You're the genuine article, all right! The real imported variety! *(Exit)*

ADELAIDE. Dear, dear! Really imported! How very reassuring! *(To KITSON)* Kitson, kindly ascertain whether Mrs. de Salle is feeling better; and

say that we are just sitting down to luncheon. (*Exit KITSON upstairs. ADELAIDE goes to porch door and waves handkerchief blithely*) Ta, ta, Mr. Tombstone—Bon voyage! (*Turns merrily to ANTHONY*) Well, dear Anthony! You provided us rare and novel entertainment. Peter Swallow, Esquire, will not soon be forgotten by your English guests, I promise you. (*Studies SWALLOW's card*) This is my souvenir! Priceless! "Peter Swallow, Monumentalist."

ANTHONY. I am delighted you found him amusing.

ADELAIDE. "Amusing!" Epoch-Making!

ANTHONY. Then it's too bad he could only stay a few minutes!

ADELAIDE. Momentous minutes, my dear Anthony. Monumentalistic minutes!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Entering from stairs*) Adelaide!

ADELAIDE. Why it is the dear little mother herself. (*Hurrying to her and assisting her across the room*) How lovely that you are better! Is the naughty vertigo quite, quite gone?

MRS. DE SALLE. Oh, yes—it is quite passed away. (*Grande dame manners*)

ANTHONY. Then you will lunch with us? (*She nods*) I will tell the others. (*Exits*)

MRS. DE SALLE. (*With a gasping outbreak*) Dell! Dell! Is it over?

ADELAIDE. (*With a flash of Yankee triumph*) Licked 'em, ma!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Gulping*) Oh my God!

ADELAIDE. Yes, licked 'em! Skinned 'em alive!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Sinking into chair*) Oh, Della, it knocks the wind plumb out of me!

ADELAIDE. Sh!

(*Enter from porch MISS RAWSON and MRS. LEAVITT, ANTHONY, JUSTIN, LEAVITT, and*

GEOFFREY. MISS RAWSON *comes to Mrs. de Salle and seems to felicitate her.*)

MRS. LEAVITT. (*To ANTHONY as they enter*) I simply would not come in till he had gone! Anthony, I shall never, never forgive you for permitting Stephen to bring that menagerie-escape here!

ANTHONY. Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh was just *thanking* me for bringing him!

MRS. LEAVITT. But what must she think of him as an American type? It makes me shudder!

LEAVITT. (*To JUSTIN*) But for the train whistle he'd have talked till Doomsday.

KITSON. (*Appearing at porch door*) Lunch is served, madam.

MISS RAWSON. (*Glancing about the assemblage*) Shall we not go out to the porch?—But where is Violet?

JUSTIN. Yes—where is she?

MISS RAWSON. We will wait just a moment, Kitson.

ANTHONY. (*Starting out*) Perhaps I had better—Oh!

VIOLET. (*Trips in, gleefully laughing and breaks out very clearly in an excited voice*) Oh, Mamma, did Adelaide tell you about it? It was such fun! He never suspected a single thing! I don't think anybody in all the world could have believed we really did come from *Missionary Loop, Indiana!*

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Paralyzed*) Ollie!

(*All the company evince great astonishment.*)

JUSTIN. Missionary Loop! What does the child mean.

ADELAIDE. Violet! What ghastly joke is this?

VIOLET. (*Standing with uplifted face, quivering*

with exaltation, resolution and terror) It isn't a joke—I'm in earnest—I'm telling—the truth!

ANTHONY. The Truth! (*Amazement suddenly gives place with him to conviction and terrible anger*)

ADELAIDE. (*With a stricken laugh, making a final desperate effort to gather her forces. She comes to VIOLET and tries to lead her upstairs*) Violet! Come to your room! (*To MISS RAWSON*) It is all the result of excitement. It will soon pass off. All she needs is absolute quiet!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Coming to them*) Yes—absolute quiet—that's all she needs! (*Quakingly*)

VIOLET. (*With the same rapt, exultant countenance*) I've said it! I've said it! Oh!

ANTHONY. (*Denouncingly*) Yes, you've said it! So you have been trapped at last! Yes, the truth has come out! (*To the assemblage, bitterly*) Permit me to introduce the wonderful Sayles Trio—from Missionary Loop, Indiana.

(And for the moment the three DE SALLES are standing in an odd huddled group, three in a row.)

JUSTIN. What does this mean?

ANTHONY. (*Swelling up with righteous indignation*) Oh, do not imagine I am unprepared for this! I have been watching them. I had my reasons for bringing Swallow here!—Former sweetheart of our precious Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, in the days when she was still *Della Sayles*—one of the two daughters of Old Jim Sayles!

MISS RAWSON. (*Aghast*) The patent medicine charlatan!

ANTHONY. Sissapoola Indian Herb Remedies! Favorite Stomach Elixir!

(Recoil of horror on the part of all except GEOFFREY who is admiring VIOLET'S courage and laughing with boyish glee.)

MISS RAWSON. Oh, it cannot be true!

ANTHONY. It is true!

MRS. LEAVITT. Oh, it is too *terrible*!

JUSTIN. If it is the truth, it is high time we knew it!

VIOLET. (*Almost with ecstasy*) It is the truth.

MISS RAWSON. She's actually boasting of it!

ANTHONY. And it's but a fraction of the whole shameful story! Imposters from the start! Mountebanks, Parvenues! (*And he strides up and down before the guilty trio*)

JUSTIN. Tricksters!

MISS RAWSON. Cheats!

MRS. LEAVITT. Ghastly!

LEAVITT. Infamous!

ANTHONY. Yes, you are found out at last!

MISS RAWSON. And just in time.

(MRS. DE SALLE has quite collapsed, and is wringing her hands. VIOLET has winced somewhat under the invective, but stands her ground with bravely shut lips, and an unflinching smile. ADELAIDE'S eyes glitter and she smiles electrically, as if biding her time for the fatal counter-stroke.)

ADELAIDE. (*With metallic, stabbing incisiveness*) What! are all the stones cast? Oh, pray do not spare us! The exercise should prove a good stimulant to your appetite! (*Suavely self-contained in the midst of all this consternation*) I believe there is an afternoon train, is there not. Anthony? It will not take us long to pack.

MRS. LEAVITT. (*Excitedly to the RAWSON family*) And till then, why should not all of you come over to Willowfields? You—er—I am crazy to show you Mr. Swallow's design for the new monument. It is the sweetest thing!

LEAVITT. Yes, do come!

ANTHONY. So kind of you to suggest it.

JUSTIN. We shall intrude upon your hospitality only until Mrs. Sayles and her daughters have departed.

MISS RAWSON. (*With cutting significance*) Do you think it would be quite safe?

ADELAIDE. (*Ironically*) Why not take your ancestral plate with you, madam?

MISS RAWSON. (*Regaining dignity—to KITSON*) Kitson will give these ladies every assistance in his power in their preparations for departure. We shall spend the afternoon at Willowfields. (*JUSTIN and LEAVITT exit, to porch. MISS RAWSON turns with gracious smile to MRS. LEAVITT and takes her arm*) Thank you with all my heart, dear Lottie. (*Flanked by ANTHONY and MRS. LEAVITT she exits without turning to look again at the DE SALLES*) It makes things so much easier for us all. (*Off-stage*) For when all is said and done——

GEOFFREY. (*Who has lingered at one side, now steps quickly to VIOLET who stands apart from her relatives*) Bully! Great! May I come back bye-and-bye?

VIOLET. (*Dazed*) Oh, I don't know.

(*Exit GEOFFREY.*)

KITSON. (*At door*) Lunch is served, Madam.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Wailing still*) Does *He* mean to insult us, too?

ADELAIDE. No thank you, Kitson, we shall not trouble you just now. (*KITSON exits*) Come, mamma. We must not lose time. Violet, stay here and enjoy your brilliant triumph! (*And she exits by stairs*)

MRS. DE SALLE. Yes, gloat! Gloat! You wicked girl! You have betrayed the mother that begat you! —(*Wailing*) Della! Della!

ADELAIDE. (*Above*) Come, mamma!

Curtain

ACT III

SCENE: *Same, ten minutes later. VIOLET, abandoned by her relatives, is seated by small table, Right. The reaction from her moments of exaltation has come; her spirits are drooping and tears very near the surface. KITSON enters with plate of lunch dainties, which he sets down beside her.*

KITSON. (*Clearing his throat to attract attention*) There, Miss. I took the liberty of fetching you a mouthful of lunch, thinking as perhaps it might brace ye up a bit.

VIOLET. (*Passively*) Thank you. That was nice of you, Kitson. (*She plays listlessly with food*)

KITSON. I'm glad if it's to your taste, Miss. Very glad, I'm sure. (*But he makes no move to go, and there is an interval of silence. Again he clears his throat*) Ahem!

VIOLET. Is there something else?

KITSON. Well, if I might make bold to speak such a thing, Miss, I thought I would like to tell you as in my humble opinion Miss Rawson and the rest was a bit too vi'lent just now.

VIOLET. (*Without interest*) You think so?

KITSON. No doubt it were very wrong of you to be deceiving everybody as you did, leading 'em to think you had blue blood in your veins when you have none; still, and at the same time, had they but seen it as *I* do, they would have esteemed it a very rare privilege to have extended their hospitality to the offspring of Old Jim Sayles, the Sufferer's Friend.—(*He comes to her, scrutinizes her countenance intently*)—And now I observe ye close to, Miss, I can trace the resemblance quite plain.

VIOLET. (*Smiling faintly*) You mean to the portrait on the bottles of the Elixir?

KITSON. The same, Miss, the same. The likeness is unmistakable. I could single you out in a thousand.

NINA. (*Entering by stairs and crossing Right toward the library*) That's right, Mr. Kitson. You're giving Miss Violet something to eat. She'd ought to have a good big appetite. (*And there can be no possible doubt as to where her sympathies are placed*)

KITSON. (*With lofty irony*) Thank you kindly for your approval, young lady.

NINA. That's all right. No charge!—And if you'd like to know the rest of what I think about this affair, I'll tell you that, too, some time, when I haven't got quite so much to do. (*Exits Right*)

KITSON. Hear, hear! (*Turning again to VIOLET*) Ah, yes, Miss. And this is what I was about to say. That many and many a time, as I've poured out me two dessert spoonfuls of that famous specific, I've said to myself, "Him as invented this wonderful Elixir must a' been a wonderful man—and, may I add, a good man, to boot." Why, young lady, there's not a single human ill or ail, to my thinking, which that stomach elixir don't give a whack to—if only, as you might say, in passing. It saved the life of Mrs. Kitson winter before last, when three doctors with one voice had given her up.

VIOLET. Is that really true. How nice!

KITSON. It was indeed, Miss. And when she finally did go, it was with a *very* different complaint to the one she started with.

NINA. (*Re-entering R. with books, an English Weekly, and a scarf*) Well, I'm sure Miss Violet ought to be very grateful to you, Kitson, for helping her while away the time so nicely. Oh, drat it! (*Her books have slipped to the floor, and she stoops*

to gather them up) But what I say is—if that's of any interest to you—that when young misses hardly out of their teens take it on themselves to run their family's private affairs—

VIOLET. (*Interrupting with quiet decision*) Isn't Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh waiting for you, Nina?

NINA. Yes, ma'am, she is! And I wisht I had a dozen sets of hands and feet instead of only one so's I could be even more use to her in this hour of trouble.

ADELAIDE. (*Appearing on stairs*) Nina!

NINA. (*Startled*) Yes, Madam.

ADELAIDE. Briggs is waiting to pack the books.—(*Descending*)

(NINA, *always impressed by MRS. BUMPSTEAD-LEIGH'S superiority, exits without a word, by stairs.*)

KITSON. (*To ADELAIDE*) Is there anything I can do, Madam?

ADELAIDE. No, Kitson, thank you. Nothing at present, I believe. (*KITSON exits. ADELAIDE paces room in intent, vivid thought, watching VIOLET*) Well, Violet, how are you enjoying yourself? (*A silence*) I hope you're not too fatigued, dear, after your exertions!—An emotional scene like that must be very taxing to the nerves! (*A silence*) And you did carry it off brilliantly—oh, brilliantly! No one could deny that. So much *élan*, so much fervor, such an acute sense of the spectacular! Oh, if I only had a photograph of it! I would have it inscribed—let me see—"Truth Crushed to Earth shall Rise Again"—and I would have it framed—beautifully framed—in gingerbread and carraway seeds. The idea fascinates me! (*Sits*)

VIOLET. Adelaide, there's no use making fun of me. I did what I did because I had to. (*In spite of herself the tears come at last*)

ADELAIDE. That's right—Squinny!—It'll do a lot of good at this stage of the game. The question is, what's to be done next? Have you got anything to say?

(MRS. DE SALLE enters by stairs eager to know what is going on. She is in a hasty negligee, evidently having left the family packing in the midst.)

VIOLET. No.—Only I've made up my mind about one thing.

ADELAIDE. (Promptly, before VIOLET has a chance to say the words) You mean you won't go back to England again! (And she turns to MRS. DE SALLE) Heard the latest Ma?

MRS. DE SALLE. No. No. What's happened now? (Hastily bringing a chair. The three members of the DE SALLE family now form a close group. VIOLET in the middle, quiveringly resolute; ADELAIDE at her Right, undaunted and unconquerable; MRS. DE SALLE, as matriarchal as possible)

ADELAIDE. Violet will tell you. Turn up your eyes, dearie, like a Virgin Martyr; wave one arm like a semaphore, and speak!

VIOLET. (Quietly decisive) I've made up my mind not to go back to England again.

MRS. DE SALLE. (Tremendously) Hey? Not go back to England?—Well, well! Now I reckon you'd better just hurry up and tell me what you mean!

VIOLET. I've made up my mind, and that's all there is about it.

MRS. DE SALLE. Made up your mind, have ye? Now I'd like to know who gave ye the right to make up your mind?—Set up and answer me! (Pause)

ADELAIDE. What are you going to do?

VIOLET. I haven't decided!—earn my living, somehow.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Cackling*) Earn her living—listen! why she never done a stroke of honest work in her life. (*Pause*)

ADELAIDE. (*Dryly*) Are ye going to be a trained nurse?

VIOLET. (*Startled*) Well—I—I *was* thinking about it.

ADELAIDE. (*As if reading headlines*) “Young heroine, disappointed in love, devotes herself to her suffering fellow men.”

VIOLET. (*With sturdiness*) I’ve *always* thought I’d like nursing!

MRS. DE SALLE. Ye have!—Why, you wouldn’t know how to nurse a sick flea.

ADELAIDE. I suppose you’ll make a specialty of handsome young parsons, afflicted with heart trouble.

VIOLET. I don’t think I’ll ever marry.

MRS. DE SALLE. Well, I reckon you’re safe there. I certainly’d pity the man who got mashed on *you*.

ADELAIDE. (*With finality*) Violet, we sail on Saturday’s boat for Southampton. That much is settled.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*The faithful echo*) Yes, that much is settled! *Do ye hear me?*

VIOLET. Well, if I go back, I go back with my real name.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Mightily*) Your real name’s de Salle: and de Salle’s the name you’ll go back with. Yes it is: don’t you dare contradict me!

VIOLET. My name is Sayles.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Crushingly*) Ollie!—Are you absolutely without any moral sense whatever?

VIOLET. (*Desperate*) Oh!

MRS. DE SALLE. When I think of the plight you’ve brought us to, I feel I’d like to give you a good smart licking. I’ve a mind to do it, right here this minute, too!

ADELAIDE. Not now, Ma. We're too busy.

MRS. DE SALLE. Well, I certainly would like to learn her, for once, who is boss in this family.

ADELAIDE. Now listen to me, both of you!

MRS. DE SALLE. Yes?

ADELAIDE. If either of you let out a scrap of this fracas in Trumpington-on-Swell, I'll fry ye alive. *(She crosses her arms and her eyes fairly glitter)*

MRS. DE SALLE. *(A close second)* Yes, yes. There! Do you hear *that*, Ollie?

ADELAIDE. I'll go the limit. There isn't anything I won't do to keep this story under. Wherever I see a head, I'll strike!

MRS. DE SALLE. Yes. Yes. So will I!

ADELAIDE. No you won't.—You keep your mouth shut! That's your job!

MRS. DE SALLE. Oh, all right, Della.

ADELAIDE. *(Thinking with all her energy)* I shall explain we found something a little off color with the Rawsons.

MRS. DE SALLE. *(Fervidly playing second)* Yes. Yes.

ADELAIDE. They didn't quite measure up.

MRS. DE SALLE. No. No.

ADELAIDE. There was a yellow streak in the family.

MRS. DE SALLE. Yes!

ADELAIDE. No one could expect us to get mixed up with people like that.

MRS. DE SALLE. No—sir—ee!

ADELAIDE. And so, just in the nick of time, Mamma definitely put her foot down on the match.

MRS. DE SALLE. *(Illustrating the act, forcefully)* Yes, I did; and good and hard, too.

VIOLET. *(Excitedly)* But I tell you I won't go back! You can go along without me! I'm going to live my own life! You can explain things to suit yourselves.

ADELAIDE. Ollie, I don't care if you are nineteen years old, Ma ought to give you that lickin'.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Swelling up with indignation*) Are you a child of mine, or are you a viper?—Answer me that! Answer me, I say! Answer me!

ADELAIDE. Yes, Ma, she's a viper—and you're a whale.

MRS. DE SALLE. A whale!

ADELAIDE. Yes, a spouting whale, and I guess I'll start a menagerie.

(*Enter NINA by stairs.*)

ADELAIDE. Well, Nina, what is it?

NINA. (*Excitedly incoherent*) Briggs—ma'am—the packing——

ADELAIDE. Oh, very well, I'll be up directly. (*Rising. Exit NINA, Left*) Violet, this pow-wow's not done yet. When I'm ready for you, I'll send down. Come along Ma. We got to vamoose. (*Starting for stairs*)

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Reluctantly following*) But are ye goin' to let her set there and defy us to our faces? Well, I guess not! That's not my way of runnin' a family.—Now, Ollie, don't you dare set hand or foot out of this room till you've decided to mind your Ma. I've said it before; and I say it now for the last time:—I'll have no Disobedience!

ADELAIDE. (*On stairs*) Oh, quit it, ma, and come on. (*Exits*)

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Submissive*) Yes, Dell. (*Exits by stairs. VIOLET sits motionless with set lips, for a moment, and is not aware of the presence of GEOFFREY, who enters quickly from the porch*)

GEOFFREY. Hello, there!—all by your lonesome?

VIOLET. Yes. (*The note of despondency in her voice startles him*)

GEOFFREY. Why, what's the matter?

VIOLET. Oh, Geoffrey, honestly and truly I meant to do what was right, I did!

GEOFFREY. (*With vehemence and tenderness*) You did do what was right. By gee, you did the pluckiest thing I ever saw a girl do. I didn't suppose they had it in 'em.

VIOLET. Oh, but—but I'm awfully mixed up about things. You see—Oh, don't you think—perhaps—it was rather—selfish and nasty of me, Geoffrey, just to save myself, and make the others pay the price for it?

GEOFFREY. *Save yourself?* Is that what you call it!

VIOLET. Yes! Yes! Because now I'm free. (*Simply, earnestly, with increasing self-confidence*) I mean, I'm just myself:—can't you see, Geoffrey? Everything else has gone.—Oh, and I *am* glad!

GEOFFREY. I'm glad, too, by jimminy. Only I don't feel as if I know you this way. There's something different about you.

VIOLET. Is there?—Well I fancy you're right. I just feel different all through and through. It seems as if I could breathe! It seems—oh, it seems as if I could fly! It does honestly. I never felt like that before.

GEOFFREY. But what's made all this change, Violet? I mean, what was it started you off?

VIOLET. (*After a pause, very simply and directly*) You.

GEOFFREY. (*Deeply startled*) Me?—Oh, no! You don't mean that!

VIOLET. Yes, I do.

GEOFFREY. But how?

VIOLET. Just—by being you.

GEOFFREY. Oh, but—don't you know, Violet? I don't count. I'm a failure. (*VIOLET denies it with a cry*) What?—You don't think so?

VIOLET. (*With all her soul*) How could I?

GEOFFREY. (*With wonder and rapture*) Violet! Do you mean it?—Do you mean it?—Will this stay true? (*He takes her in his arms*)

VIOLET. Always, forever, Geoffrey, if you want me!

GEOFFREY. Want you! (*He kisses her exuberantly*)

VIOLET. I have truly belonged to you since the first day, although I didn't know it.

GEOFFREY. Violet, I feel as if I'd loved you all my life, only I never found it out until a week ago.

(*They are like a pair of kids in their happiness.*)

VIOLET. (*Surprised*) Oh, but I thought you didn't like me at all—at least not after the very beginning.

GEOFFREY. Did I manage to be a little nasty?

VIOLET. Yes, dear, and I respect you for it very much!

NINA. (*Entering by stairs, with a flounce*) Pardon, Miss.

VIOLET. What is it, Nina.

NINA. Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh says you're to come straight upstairs!

GEOFFREY. (*To VIOLET*) Look here. Why don't you ask her to come *here*?

VIOLET. (*Summoning resolution*) I will.—Nina, you may tell my sister I prefer to see her here.

NINA. (*Significantly*) Well—I'll tell her, Miss. (*Exits upstairs*)

VIOLET. (*Impulsively*) Oh, Geoffrey, are you sure you'll not be sorry you took me? It's not too late yet to say so. You know I'm not half good enough for you.—I'm not—truly, truly, I'm not!

GEOFFREY. Oh, Violet! What nonsense! It's me that's not half good enough for you.

VIOLET. No, it's not! It's me.

GEOFFREY. No, it's me.

VIOLET. It isn't. Hush—listen dear, I was just going to say something quite important.

GEOFFREY. Well.

VIOLET. Oh, yes, well, this is what it was—don't you think it's a perfectly awful situation,—in a way?

GEOFFREY. No doubt about it at all. Won't the family raise—Hooray? But say, will you come out to New Mexico?

VIOLET. The ranch? I'm dying to!—But oh, Della will be furious!

GEOFFREY. Suppose she is! Remember you're free. That's what you said.

VIOLET. Yes, Geoffrey and so I am. Only I don't know whether Adelaide quite realizes it.

ADELAIDE. (*Entering by stairs with a flash of controlled indignation*) Violet, I understand that you wish to have me speak to you here, rather than in the privacy of our apartment. Well, so be it.

VIOLET. (*Vividly, breathlessly*) I thought you ought to know—that Geoffrey has asked me to marry him, and I have said "Yes"!

ADELAIDE. (*Staggered*) What! (*To GEOFFREY*) Is this the *Truth*!

GEOFFREY. (*Vigorously*) You bet it's the truth! We're going to be married just as soon as we can get the license.

(*The two youngsters face her defiantly, expecting a terrific rejoinder; but instead there is a gasping pause, and then ADELAIDE breaks out with a perfect gale of laughter, incapable of restraining herself. VIOLET and GEOFFREY are finally caught up into this spasm of hilarity, though perfectly bewildered.*)

ADELAIDE. Ha, ha, ha!—Oh, ho, ho!—Ha, ha!—Why!—Oh, ho! (*Sitting, still shaken with cosmic mirth*)

VIOLET. (*Much perplexed*) Adelaide—What's the matter?

ADELAIDE. (*Gradually becoming coherent*) Oh, nothing, nothing—why, but my dear little sister! Why,—why—did you never breathe a word of this before?

VIOLET. Because I only knew it three minutes ago.

ADELAIDE. (*With sudden misgiving*) It's absolutely settled.

GEOFFREY. Settled!—Well I should say Yes!

ADELAIDE. (*Coming between them with the gentle benigance of a fairy godmother*) Why, I'm very, very glad! How blind I must have been not to see earlier that you two were divinely meant for each other! Both so direct, so true-hearted, so—so—I mean to say—so idealistic! But does anyone know of this?

GEOFFREY. No, you see—we—we sort of wanted to tell you first.

ADELAIDE. My dear Geoffrey! You have my very heartiest good wishes! You take from me the dearest little sister in the world. (*She touches VIOLET's hair tenderly*) I cannot tell you what she has been to me in the past; but I give her to you,—(*And she joins their hands*)—knowing that you, and you only, can make her truly happy! But—but I suppose the others must be told at once.

VIOLET. (*With some reluctance*) I suppose they must.

ADELAIDE. My dear children, if you are willing to leave the responsibility in my hands. I shall be glad to explain to—Anthony. I think—yes, I think I can promise that he will change his attitude.

GEOFFREY. (*Incredulous*) Well, I can't say it sounds very easy.

ADELAIDE. I know it; but in any event let me try. (*To VIOLET*) Trust me, dear. If I have

erred in the past,—and who has not erred, some time?—it has not been through any lack of devotion to your welfare. Now that I see things in a clearer light, I want to do my best to rectify them.

GEOFFREY. (*With boyish enthusiasm*) Say, you're the kind of pal we're looking for just now.

ADELAIDE. Well, you two go off for a little ramble together. Go and see the pigs. You won't object to that, surely, Violet,—not if this affair is only five minutes old! (*And she gently but firmly impels them toward the porch*)

VIOLET. (*Going*) Come on! (*At door*) But how about the train?

ADELAIDE. Don't worry.

GEOFFREY. Say, you know, I'm beginning to believe in miracles.

ADELAIDE. *Faith* for you, brother.—*Works* for me. (*GEOFFREY and VIOLET exit. ADELAIDE turns to KITSON who enters Left*) Kitson, is there a newspaper reporter calling for me?

KITSON. No, ma'am.

ADELAIDE. I wired for one. Let me know when he arrives.

KITSON. Yes, ma'am, and if I might presume to speak a word, Madam,—(*He hesitates to continue, waiting for a sign of encouragement from her; but she is self-absorbed. After a silence he clears his throat and proceeds:*) I thought it might not be amiss, if I was to observe to you, that for my part, I consider it a very rare privilege to have laid eyes on the Offspring of Old Jim Sayles, the Sufferer's Friend! (*Again he waits for a response*) And I may add, madam, that in my opinion you are the very image of your lamented Pa.

ADELAIDE. (*Bored*) Thanks.

KITSON. And that is why I thought it might be what they call a little crumb of comfort to you if I was to remark that, for my part, I've good reason

to think it's you gets the best of the deal, in the long run.

ADELAIDE. (*Hardly interested, slightly irritated*) I haven't the slightest idea what you mean by that, my good man, not the slightest.

KITSON. (*Approaching her with mysterious confidential manner*) I suppose you think it's a great prize you lost, when you lost Mr. Anthony.

ADELAIDE. (*With a beginning of interest*) You mean to say you know something detrimental to Mr. Anthony?

KITSON. If ever a whited sepulchre walked on two legs——

ADELAIDE. (*Suddenly alert, domineering*) You must tell me everything!

KITSON. I cannot, madam.

ADELAIDE. You must! Quickly! (*She rises*)

KITSON. These lips are sealed.

ADELAIDE. (*Advancing upon him*) Kitson! The daughter of Old Jim Sayles commands you to unseal them! (*She takes the attitude of a prophetess*)

KITSON. (*Retreating from her. Deeply shaken*) Eh! What's that, madam?

ADELAIDE. Speak and speak quickly! (*The weight and authority of a thousand bottles of Elixir are in her voice*)

KITSON. Er—er—er——

ADELAIDE. Do not keep me waiting!

KITSON. (*Stuttering with awe*) Her name, madam, was Mamie Tanner——

ADELAIDE. (*Noting the name to herself*) Mamie Tanner.

KITSON. And she lived over yonder, two miles from here, at a little place called Herring Grove.

ADELAIDE. Herring Cove. Yes! yes!—she was in service here? Be quick!

KITSON. (*His mind beginning to go to pieces*)

under her electrical domination) Well, no, not exactly as you might say in service, but every now and again, as the occasion might require, she would be coming here to do a bit of plain sewing or—

(At this instant ADELAIDE becomes aware of the approach of ANTHONY who is now visible on porch, and very suavely and graciously she observes:)

ADELAIDE. Thank you, Kitson for a most appetizing lunch. You know the art of tempting an indifferent palate.

KITSON. *(Perceiving, with consternation, the cause of her changed manner)* Eh, eh, that's all right, madam, I'm sure. *(Exits with tray)*

ANTHONY. *(Loftily)* My aunt requests me to give you this time-table, fearing that you might not know the exact hour at which the train leaves. It leaves, you will observe, at 3:55. *(He indicates the figure in the folder)*

ADELAIDE. *(Charmingly)* So very kind of Miss Rawson to think of it! Everything is provided for our comfort!

ANTHONY. And if there is nothing else,—I will return at once to the family. *(And he starts to do so)*

ADELAIDE. *(Sweetly)* Just one word! I thought you might be interested to learn of Violet's engagement to your brother.

ANTHONY. *(Recoiling)* What!

ADELAIDE. *(Suavely)* Yes, they are engaged.

ANTHONY. I do not believe it!

ADELAIDE. As you choose.

ANTHONY. *(Furiously)* No! We are done with the whole pack of you! Imposters! Parvenues!

ADELAIDE. *(Smilingly)* And the rest! I dimly recall the list!

ANTHONY. Ten times the list would fall short of the truth!

ADELAIDE. (*Blandly*) I will multiply it by ten, mentally, and let it go at that!

ANTHONY. Then you see how fortunate you are to get away with a whole skin.

ADELAIDE. I thought you had skinned us quite effectually, just now.

ANTHONY. Well then—skin for skin! (*Going*)

ADELAIDE. (*Stops him with a glitter*) So be it! Wait! One little moment,—if you please!

ANTHONY. (*Impatiently*) What else?

ADELAIDE. (*Sweetly*) Well, suppose—just suppose I say—a purely hypothetical case—of course—but suppose I should happen to possess certain facts—oh, very slight, trivial facts, of course—

ANTHONY. (*Loftily*) Are you threatening me?

ADELAIDE. Oh, my dear young man, you go too fast!

ANTHONY. *What* are your threats?

ADELAIDE. Your—private life—invites the microscope?

ANTHONY. (*Sternly*) What do you mean by that?

ADELAIDE. (*Almost toyingly*) There are no flaws in the perfect crystal of your character? Not even a flyspeck?

ANTHONY. Insinuations!—Give us facts!

ADELAIDE. (*Crisply*) What about Nina?

ANTHONY. Nina?

ADELAIDE. (*Bluntly*) Yes, Nina! Would you like it reported that this very morning, while the young lady to whom you were engaged was out of the house, you were hugging and kissing the housemaid?

ANTHONY. I deny it—flatly!

ADELAIDE. (*Musingly*) I see—even though Nina might corroborate me in every detail.

ANTHONY. Witness of a servant! Oh, even in America servants may be bribed! (*Completely self-possessed*) So that is your artillery, Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh! Well, I very much fear you will have to fire again!

ADELAIDE. Very well, since you invite the fire you shall have it. I was hoping it might not be necessary, because I do hate blood.

ANTHONY. (*Halting—but attempting to seem confident*) What is it?

ADELAIDE. I will tell you a story. By the shore of a little inlet from the sea,—oh, on the other side of the world, of course—clusters a tiny group of fishermen's houses—poor—weather-beaten habitations—known in the district as—as *Herring Cove*!—

ANTHONY. (*Sinking to chair*) Herring Cove!

ADELAIDE. Oh, why carry this wretched story further? (*With impassioned manner*) Is there in all the world a more contemptible figure than that of the man who sits in the ancestral pew on the Sabbath Day, smug, pious as a Pharisee, and on Monday, when no one is looking, takes advantage of the ignorance and weakness of poor innocent young girls! (*Denouncingly*) Yes, it is of you I am speaking, of you, the pride of your father, the apple of your Aunt Abigail's eye—hypocrite! Scoundrel! Betrayer of poor Mamie Tanner! (*Her emotions are now permitted to overcome her. She chokes and quivers*)

ANTHONY. (*Trying to hold his own, but scarcely able to speak for confusion*) Mamie Tanner—she knew a thing or two!

ADELAIDE. (*Ignoring*) The world needs more such men! The race of psalm-singers needs recruits! When I tell the story of Mamie Tanner to your father, as duty bids me to do—

ANTHONY. (*Stricken*) You will not do it!

ADELAIDE. (*Seeming immensely moved*) I will—poor girl—My duty! My duty!

ANTHONY. (*Collapsing*) Name your terms, I accept them.

ADELAIDE. (*Dropping into a chair, fanning herself with the time-table*) My goodness, if you'd only said that five minutes ago, you'd have saved me a lot of hard work! On a hot day, too! Well, the terms are very simple. (*Succinctly as a general naming terms of capitulation*) First, you will persuade your father and aunt to accept the present situation. Second, you will secure an urgent invitation for us to stay out our visit here. Third, you will have business in town that will take you off the field of operations by the afternoon express—(*She shows him the time-table with precise care*)—which, "you will observe" leaves at 3:55.

ANTHONY. (*Cowering*) Impossible! Impossible! They will *never* accept you. I am certain to fail.

ADELAIDE. You fail! You, the idol!—never! Wag your head,—that settles it!

ANTHONY. You do not know them. They are adamant.

ADELAIDE. There is the telephone. Suppose you ask them to come over.

ANTHONY. It's outrageous. I shall do nothing of the sort! (*But in spite of his words he goes to the telephone*) This is nothing less than blackmail!

ADELAIDE. The happiness of one I love is at stake.

ANTHONY. (*At 'phone*) Mrs. Leavitt? This is Anthony. Would you be so kind as to ask my father and Aunt Abigail to come over for a few minutes? Yes, thank you very much. I'll explain everything later. (*Hangs up receiver*)

ADELAIDE. (*To KITSON who has just entered from study with card tray*) For me, Kitson?

KITSON. For you, madam. (*Presenting card*) The gentleman from the newspaper.

ADELAIDE. Ah, yes, The Evening Chronicle.—Ask him to wait. (*Exit KITSON*)

ANTHONY. What's this new trick?

ADELAIDE. Trick?—Why, I don't understand you.

ANTHONY. What do you mean by having a newspaper man in this house?

ADELAIDE. My dear Anthony, you think too harshly of newspaper men. Some of them are perfectly respectable persons,

ANTHONY. You are planning something against us: that's the long and short of it.

ADELAIDE. Dear Brother, you have nothing to fear so long as you do precisely what I direct. And now I think you'd better go and meet your ancestors!—Prepare their minds as gently and tactfully as you can. And I shall be waiting here. (*Exit ANTHONY*)

(ADELAIDE is about to seat herself at table Right for writing when NINA enters Left.)

NINA. Madam!

ADELAIDE. Well, Nina?

NINA. (*Eagerly, mysteriously*) I couldn't tell you very well while Mrs. de Salle was around upstairs. It's something private.

ADELAIDE. (*Delaying her writing to listen*) Something private, my girl?

NINA. Yes, madam, I thought perhaps it was something I'd ought to tell you.

ADELAIDE. I like your strong sense of duty, Nina; but I must ask you to make haste.

NINA. Thank you, madam. After the way you treated me this morning, I'm certainly glad if I can return the favor.

ADELAIDE. Well! Proceed!

NINA. It's something I heard, madam.

ADELAIDE. Yes, yes.

NINA. Not anything so very much in a way; only I was pretty sure it would lead on to something, you know, if anybody could follow it up.

ADELAIDE. Yes, yes, I understand perfectly. Go on—go on—Nina!

NINA. It was about Mr. Anthony!

ADELAIDE. Mr. Anthony—*more* about Mr. Anthony?—and what about Mr. Anthony—this time?

NINA. Well, Mr. Kitson was telling me there was this girl named Mamie Tanner, or something like that.

ADELAIDE. Mamie Tanner. Yes, to be sure, and what about Mamie Tanner?

NINA. Well, that's just it, ma'am.

ADELAIDE. Yes, yes. That's just it. Tell me, go on, my good girl!

NINA. I can't tell any more.

ADELAIDE. (*With sudden change of manner*) You mean to say that's all you know?

NINA. That's all I could get out of Mr. Kitson.

ADELAIDE. (*Almost sharply*) All you know is there was a girl named Mamie Tanner?

NINA. He wouldn't say one single solitary word more, though I pled with him to beat the band.

ADELAIDE. You mean to tell me then that all you know is there was a girl named Mamie Tanner?

NINA. (*Crestfallen*) Yes, Madam. Oh, but I'm quite positive it must have been something very—very—disreputable.

ADELAIDE. Disreputable! Oh! (*Her manner suddenly becomes tender and reproachful*) My good girl, if you think that under any circumstances whatever I could have the least wish to listen to scandal, you have made a very grave blunder in—

deed! I make it a rule always to believe the best of everybody.

NINA. But I thought, ma'am, you kind of suggested to me this morning I was to tell you things. And after what they said to you——

ADELAIDE. (*With almost martyr patience*) If I have been made to suffer unjustly, Nina, I try to bear it uncomplainingly, with patience and fortitude. And if my words can have any influence with you, my dear girl, remember in the future, when you are tempted to hear or to repeat any unkind thing that may be said of another, it is better, it is truer, it is more Christian, to have nothing whatever to do with it.—Wait a minute! (NINA *who is about to go, halts*) Unless, I mean to say, it is something, oh quite definite and explicit!

NINA. Yes, ma'am. (*Exits meekly*)

ADELAIDE. (*Breaking into a laugh as she begins writing*) "The engagement is announced"——

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Entering perturbedly by stairs*) Oh, Dell, Dell—what you doin' down here! and not half our duds packed!

ADELAIDE. Hush! Can't you see I'm busy!

MRS. DE SALLE. But it's less than an hour to train time.

ADELAIDE. (*Occupied with her writing*) Ma, I'm at the crisis of my career. Can't twiddle about trains.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Baffled and desperate*) But we're chucked!

ADELAIDE. That's why I'm busy. Goin' to be a sequel to this story!

MRS. DE SALLE. Whatever d'ye mean, Dell?

ADELAIDE. (*Still writing*) Ma, if I can only play the game right for about ten minutes more, we can go home and riddle Lady Fitzhugh's old gas balloon so full of holes it'll never go up again.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*With Hoosier amazement*)
How you ever goin' to do that?

ADELAIDE. Haven't an idea; but I'm goin' to do it.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Momentously*) Dell.

ADELAIDE. Well, Ma?

MRS. DE SALLE. You ken say what ye like about your pa; but you're your pa through and through.

ADELAIDE. (*Rising good-humoredly and impelling her mother towards the stairs*) And now you run along upstairs, like a good little mother, and put yourself in cold storage till wanted.

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Faintly protesting*) Dell, I'm all topsy-turvy!

ADELAIDE. Haven't time to set you right side up! Go on upstairs, Ma, and do exactly as you're told!

MRS. DE SALLE. (*Mounting stairs*) I've never had a chanst to do anything else. (*Exits*)

(*Enter on porch ANTHONY, JUSTIN, MISS RAWSON.*

ADELAIDE stands unobtrusively at one side.)

JUSTIN. (*Still outside*) No, I say. No! No! It is impossible! Outrageous! I shall never give my consent! (*They enter the room*) If Geoffrey persists in tying himself up with this disreputable patent-medicine crowd, everything is at an end between him and his family.

MISS RAWSON. (*Coming down Left with iron-clad dignity*) Yes, absolutely at an end.

JUSTIN. Five generations of Rawsons turn in their graves at the very mention of such an infamous alliance.

ANTHONY. But, my dear father, at least I have a right to be heard in my brother's defense.

JUSTIN. Anthony, you are out of your head. You're mad!

MISS RAWSON. (*With immense authority*) Re-

member, Justin, it is Anthony! However preposterous his request he shall have a hearing. (*And she sits, forcing herself to listen to an unwelcome argument*)

JUSTIN. (*Espying ADELAIDE down Right*) May I beg that we be left alone?

ANTHONY. I have asked Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh to be present.

JUSTIN. This is too much! (*And he turns on ADELAIDE commandingly*) Madam, permit me to apprise you, for the last time, that your empire in this house is at an end.

ADELAIDE. You are very explicit, Mr. Rawson. But suppose—(*Drawing near ANTHONY*)—suppose there should be means at hand whereby I could regain it.

ANTHONY. (*Terrorized*) Er—er—first of all, let me speak. Let us try to consider the situation dispassionately, reasonably.

JUSTIN. Reasonably! Reasonably! Pah!

ANTHONY. Yes. What actual injury have we received from the de Salles? Family is something, I admit——

MISS RAWSON. The Main thing!

JUSTIN. They lied to us from the start.

ADELAIDE. Ah, my dear Mr. Rawson, but that is just what we did not do. We were silent—nothing more. Would you have had me wear a label on my bosom—"Daughter of Old Jim Sayles."—Would you, I ask? Would you?

MISS RAWSON. Yes, I would! And a very good thing for everybody.

ADELAIDE. How? In what way? Tell me, what relation can be found between a past that has been put behind me forever, and a present which I have created for myself, by sheer force of will—against every possible obstacle? What, I ask, is the one great, superb, inspiring thing in your vaunted

American idea? Lincoln was born in a little poor log cabin. Would you, for that reason, have turned him from your doors? (*Secretly punches ANTHONY into action*)

ANTHONY. Yes, yes—her argument is sound. It deserves attention.

JUSTIN. Anthony, you are too soft-hearted.

ANTHONY. You will not refuse to listen?

MISS RAWSON. (*Rising to go*) I have listened quite long enough to the adventuress from Missionary Loop, Indiana! Words may varnish facts, they cannot alter them.

ADELAIDE. (*Positively*) Well, for my part, I have no wish to alter them. I am tired, tired of tacking with every shift of the wind. I am tired of apologizing for a course of action which in my heart I am proud of. Henceforth the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! I will make my appeal to the American people. (*And she takes a step towards the study*)

JUSTIN. (*Amazed*) What does the woman mean!

ADELAIDE. (*Facing him*) There is a newspaper representative in this house at the present moment. He comes from the Evening Chronicle. I am going to tell him the whole story of the Sayles Family to date—omitting nothing! *Everything* from Missionary Loop to Trumpington-on-Swell! And the American people will judge between us! You, with your hidebound, moth-eaten conservatism——

JUSTIN. (*Dropping into chair*) In the papers! The whole story!

ADELAIDE. Yes. (*Takes another step towards study*)

MISS RAWSON. (*Distracted*) Stop her! Stop her!

ADELAIDE. Why should I spare your feelings? Have you spared mine? (*Takes still another step toward the fatal door*)

JUSTIN. (*Following her*) Wait, madam! Wait! In heaven's name!

ADELAIDE. I have nothing to fear from publicity. The papers will vindicate me. (*Another step*)

MISS RAWSON. (*Stifling*) In the papers! Oh!

ANTHONY. (*To his Aunt*) We must yield to her.

ADELAIDE. (*At the study door with rapture*) Henceforth I live in the Daylight! (*Reaching for the knob*)

JUSTIN. Will you turn a deaf ear to the prayers of the oldest living Rawson?

ADELAIDE. (*Reaching again for the knob*) Is it likely that her prayers would move me!

MISS RAWSON. (*Coming to her—supplicatingly*) Oh, listen to us! Listen to us!

ADELAIDE. (*Reaching again for the knob*) Listen to you, Madam? (*Turns the knob*)

MISS RAWSON. Whatever we have done, don't bring this awful disgrace upon us!

JUSTIN. Won't you listen, Madam? (*Pause*)

ADELAIDE. (*After an apparent struggle*) Am I perhaps thinking too much of my own happiness? (*She crosses the room thoughtfully*) Could I ever know one moment of peace at the price of another's misery?

MISS RAWSON. We will accept your sister. Violet and Geoffrey shall have our blessing.

JUSTIN. Anything! Anything! Madam!

(ADELAIDE turns and surveys the three, who stand in an imploring group exactly where she stood with her family, at the moment of exposure.)

ADELAIDE. (*Seeming to master herself.—Coming to them tenderly*) For your sake, for yours, for Anthony's sake, for the sake of that little sister whom I love and cherish more dearly than anyone

else in the world, I will yield! (*Sits with exhausted manner; but if you look closely you might detect a triumphant glitter in her eye*)

MISS RAWSON. You are very kind! (*Drops into chair by table, Right*)

ADELAIDE. Once more I consent to the shackles. I promise to hold my peace. Anthony, dear, there is a little announcement of the engagement. Kindly take it to the reporter. (*ANTHONY exits, Right. ADELAIDE goes up to porch door and looks out*) And now—(*She waves handkerchief*) I want you to tell Violet and Geoffrey just how you feel toward them. I sent them out to play in the barnyard, the dears. There they are! (*Calling*) Come, Violet! Hurry!—Hurry!

JUSTIN. (*To MISS RAWSON*) There's no help! We must put the best face on it.

MISS RAWSON. But I shall be a Rawson, Justin, to the last!

ADELAIDE. (*To VIOLET who is coming with GEOFFREY on porch*) Miss Rawson is waiting to give you her blessing, dear!

(*Enter VIOLET and GEOFFREY.*)

VIOLET. Oh! it's too good to be true!

ADELAIDE. (*Half audibly*) Too good to be true! Yes, it is—almost! (*Seats herself with sigh*) That was a dickens of a close call!

JUSTIN. (*Forcing himself to carry out the letter of his promise*) Geoffrey, my boy, I congratulate you!

MISS RAWSON. (*Equally conscientious and unhappy*) Violet, my dear, I am so very glad!

VIOLET. (*Radiantly*) Oh, I can hardly believe it!

MISS RAWSON. Anthony has explained everything. We hope you will be very, very happy—in New Mexico!



ADELAIDE. (*Wiping her eyes*) The dears!

(GEOFFREY summons VIOLET up to door with a gesture. They stand there, amused, puzzled, happy. With a final effort of self-mastery, MISS RAWSON turns to ADELAIDE. Her manner conforms to necessity; but her voice is undisguisedly hostile.)

MISS RAWSON. Dear Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh, may we not hope that you will remain with us another week?—Do consent!

ADELAIDE. Dear Miss Rawson, you are very kind. I do wish that it might be possible. But I scarcely know what is best.

JUSTIN. (*ICILY, from across the room*) Let me add my entreaties, Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh. The house would seem quite empty without you!

ADELAIDE. (*Sweetly*) I think—indeed, I am all but certain, we can manage it—at least for a day or two. But, of course, you will permit me, before giving a definite response, to consult mamma. (*She seems to be going at once*) Mamma, dear! Mamma!

(*Exchanging one last significant look with JUSTIN, MISS RAWSON sinks into a chair.*)

Curtain

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